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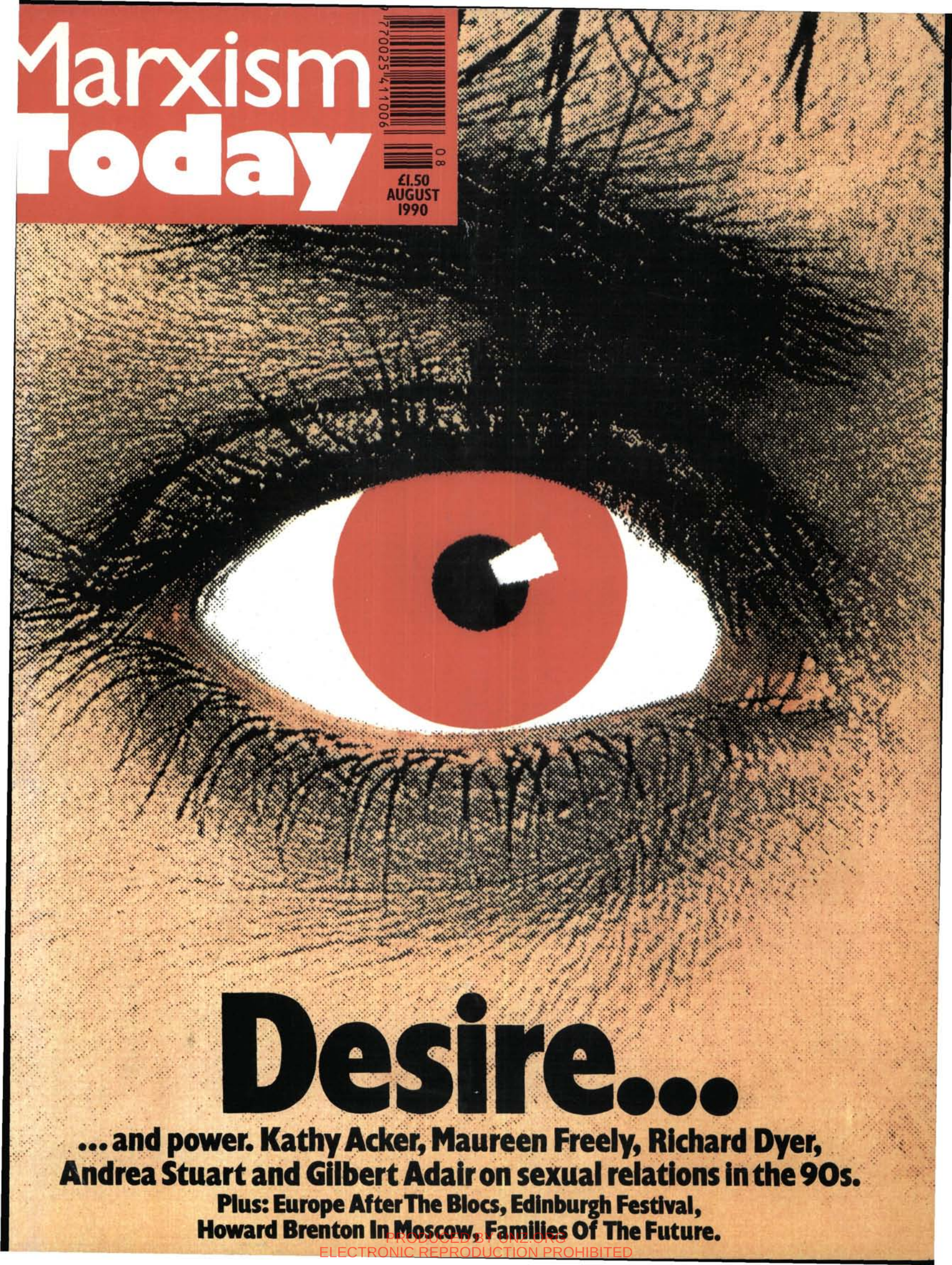

Desire...

... and power. Kathy Acker, Maureen Freely, Richard Dyer, Andrea Stuart and Gilbert Adair on sexual relations in the 90s.

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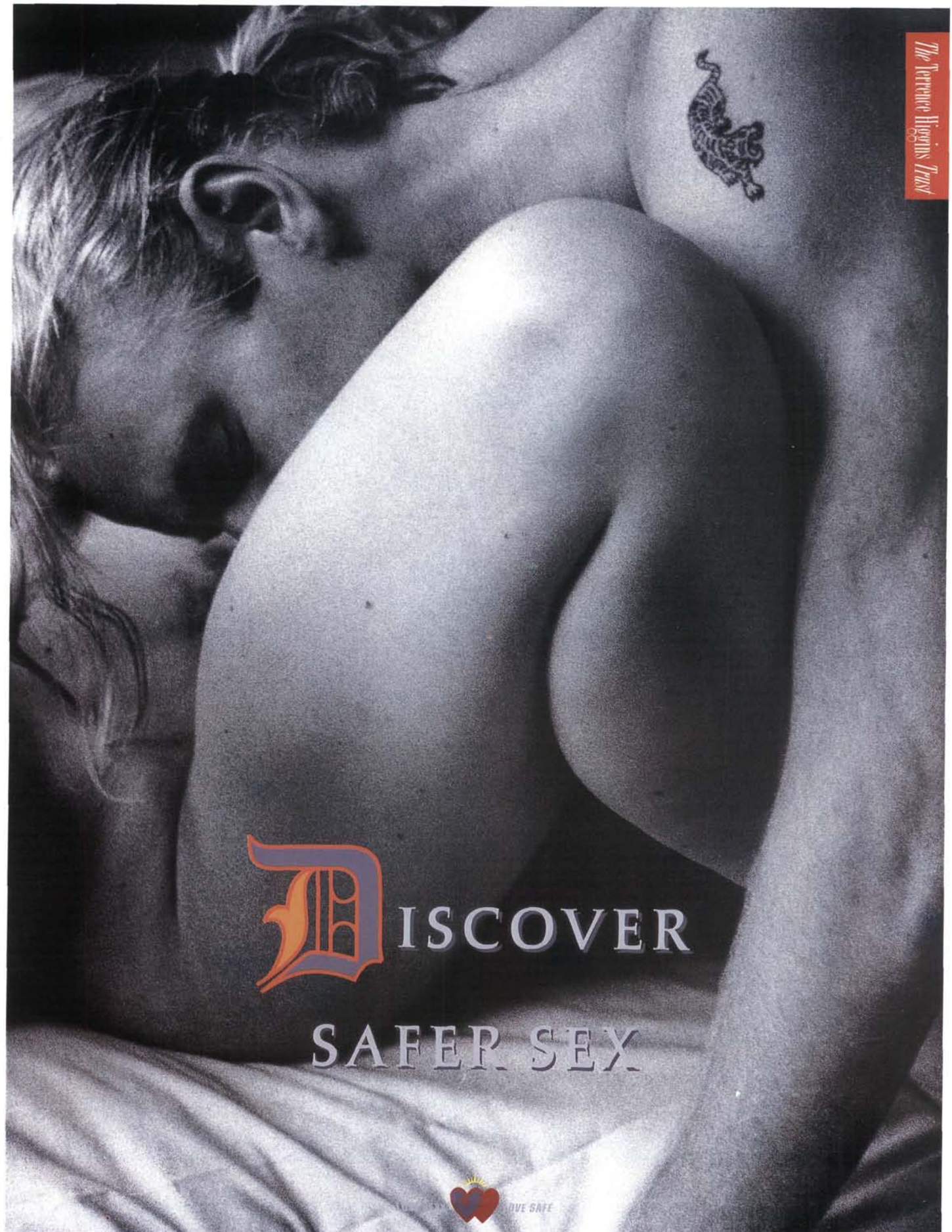

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Coming next month: The peace dividend, Catherine Belsey on true love, Geoff Mulgan on responsibility, Theresa Gorman interview
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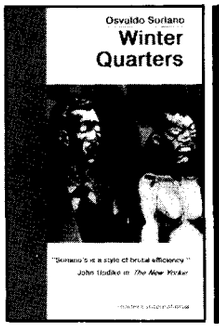

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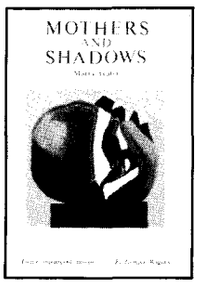

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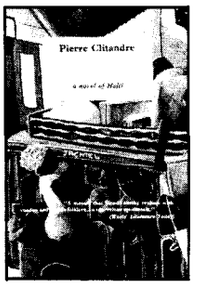
'Remarkable contribution to new writing by women in Latin America' *Village Voice*



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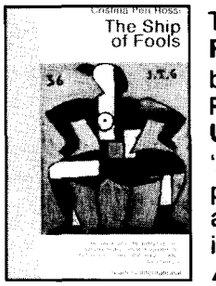

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Donald Sassoon on German power

Fawlty Logic

A SCHMEISSER IN THE GRASP OF A FELDWEBEL WAS BLATTERING AT THE WEAPON-PIT. THE GERMAN SERGEANT CHECKED TO SIGHT IT....
FOR YOU, TOMMY, THE WAR IS OVER!
NEVER! I'M NICHOLAS RIDLEY!

Cartoon: Nick Newman

The Ridley affair and the leaked Chequers memorandum on the German national character have revealed the existence of a Fawlty Towers tendency within the cabinet, so called after the episode in the tv series in which John Cleese/Basil Fawlty compulsively reminds his perfectly well-behaved German customers about the last war. Basil Fawlty represents a particular national type: the stiff, crass, middle-class Englishman without whom Thatcherism would find it difficult to exist.

Fawlty compensates for his inferiority complex by 'aggressiveness, bullying, egotism, a capacity to excess, a strong inclination to self-pity, a longing to be liked and chronic insensitivity for the feelings of others', to list but a few of the German national traits so brilliantly highlighted by the distinguished gin-and-tonic ('easy on the tonic') academics who took part in the Chequers seminar.

But could Fawlty and the Tory who hates Germany have a point? Germany is big, rich, powerful – soon to be bigger, richer and even more powerful. And if the Germans can only behave 'like Germans', which, presumably, means like jack-booted stormtroopers itching to rape Czechoslovakia, is it not proper to worry about it?

It took particular historical conditions to make the Germans 'behave like the Germans'. Prior to 1914 the world appeared to Germany as a hostile place dominated by two imperial powers, France and Britain, which had effectively carved up the world. After defeat in the first world war, a humiliated Germany lost its status as a major power and was devastated, first by inflation, then by unemployment. Its new democratic political system had few supporters. This was the background to Hitler and Nazism.

And now? Germany enjoys unparalleled prosperity. Its democratic institutions are strong and supported by all political parties in both Germanys. Re-unification, the dream of German nationalism, is being achieved peacefully and democratically with the blessing of both superpowers. And contrary to present nationalist trends in eastern Europe, Germany wants more integration into the EC. This means accepting the loss of national sovereignty which goes with further integration. Not much to worry about then. And if it is German economic preponderance within the EC that one fears, then this can be checked more effectively by a democratic, integrated Community than by a free-market Europe. Today's Germans, unlike Adolf Hitler, can hardly be discontented with what they have achieved. German success may cause envy, but self-satisfied fat cats do not usually go to war.

If we are uneasy about European stability and peace it is further east than Berlin that we must look. If the USSR, though one should say Russia, having failed to achieve economic recovery within a democratic framework, is isolated and cut off from Europe, its empire disintegrated, its national dignity in tatters, then the road will be open for the emergence of an authoritarian Russian populism with no stake in the present international order. This is understood in Paris and Bonn where the wait-and-see attitude of the British is rejected in favour of a more concrete support for Gorbachev.

Great Britain, though one should say England, lags far behind, worrying about its past and its future, its foreign policy in disarray, its special relationship with the USA a music-hall joke, its European policy non-existent. In the western part of Europe, it approximates more than any other to the conditions which, in the past, led the Germans to behave like Germans; a diseased economy, a semi-democratic political system (a hereditary and appointed upper chamber, a ridiculous electoral system, a pathetically secretive governing class) and a longing for a long-lost empire. ●

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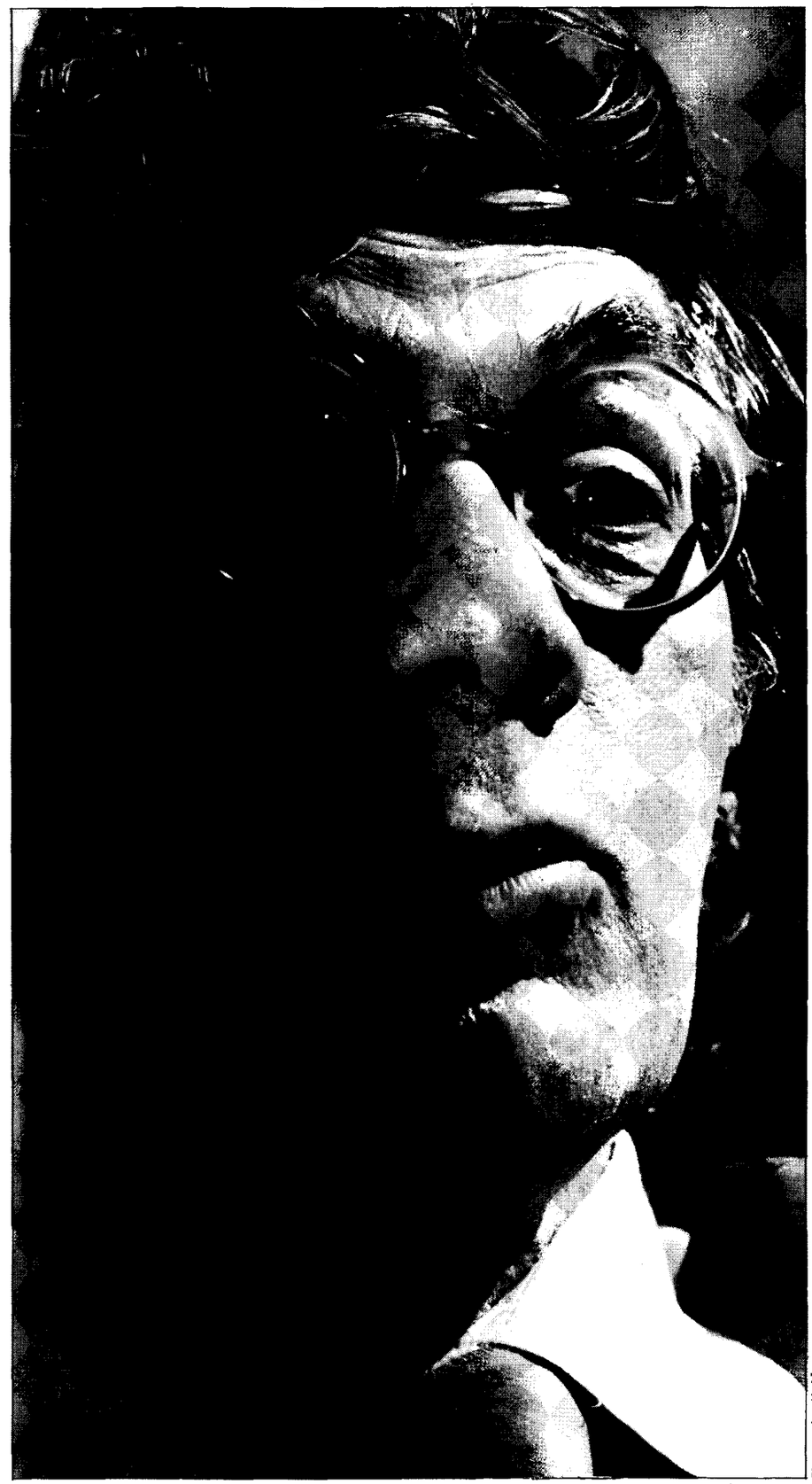
EYE TO EYE

Charlie Leadbeater discusses the principle of equality

Right And Wrong

Ted Honderich is Grote Professor of Philosophy at University College, London and author of *Conservatism* (Hamish Hamilton)



Photography: Abel Lagos

Many people would say that the Thatcherite era has seen a considerable moral uplift in Britain with stress on self-reliance and individuals taking responsibility for their own actions. You obviously think Britain is heading towards some sort of moral lowland. Why? In what sense?

Well, one brief answer is that people are differently capable of advancing their lives through their own efforts, and the Thatcher governments have ever decreased the assistance given to those who are least capable. It really does seem to be morally absurd that you should praise the increasing degree of individual responsibility in a society when an overwhelmingly larger fact is that you give less help to those who are least able to exercise effectively their own responsibility. There's really only one moral principle of overwhelming social importance, and it is the principle of equality.

Why have we headed in such a determined fashion for the moral lowlands?

A very relevant fact is that we have been encouraged in low attitudes by the Thatcher governments. They simply put different names on the attitudes: they speak of self-reliance and initiative and responsibility.

Part of what I think people find appealing about the new Right is that they have sanctioned an interest in yourself, your ability to act as an individual. Do we necessarily want to deny those things?

One does wrong by caring less and less about those persons who are most in need of one's concern. You can make everybody better off, but some segments, classes or groups tremendously better off and others minimally so. One can ask which of the many distributions that fall under that description is favoured by the new Right.

So if you look at British society now, do you think that there is a reassertion of a proper morality? If you just take the Labour Party, there won't be much re-nationalisation, their welfare policies are cautious and targeted and there is a fairly widespread acceptance of the useful role of markets and incentives, particularly reflected in their tax policies.

I'm inclined to accept the trimming of the Labour Party. It's a democratic party and it seems to be necessary, in order to win a democratic election, to trim. I myself am

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untroubled by the extent to which the Labour Party abandons the true socialist faith, because I feel so strongly about the need for some change.

What is left of the alternative to the politics of selfishness?
One part of the alternative is obviously an encouragement of what you can call social altruism. That is not a fantasy. A greater degree of that did exist before 1979 and there seems no reason why it shouldn't reassert itself.

I think it is disputable. I don't think there was much social altruism in the 1970s.
Do you not think that the defence of the welfare state could be regarded as a fact which testified to the degree of social altruism which is now missing? Why do you think the welfare state has been run down?

There's a fundamental question about whether that set of institutions is capable of matching any sort of needs or desires of a society, which is very different from what you've been saying.
It matches the need or desire of a society to have decent health care.

It does. But support for those institutions and the principles they embody also depends on them delivering things to their consumers. And one of the lessons of the last 10 years, which I think is a part of selfishness which needs to be retained, is the importance of not disregarding what consumers express desires for, selfishly.
You speak of the client base and consumers as if these were pure rational egos. They're not. They're assaulted by propaganda of various kinds, to the effect that the NHS is a monstrously inefficient organisation. I happen to be unpersuaded of that. But in addition I can certainly imagine preferring a society which was less efficient in some clear sense, and fairer, to a more efficient, less fair society. I very much hang on to that view. Why do you think the poll tax is opposed?

It's selfish.
It seems to me it's opposed importantly because it is very generally perceived as unfair. I live in Hampstead and my tax has been halved. You walk down the road a quarter of a mile in the direction of Gospel Oak and you find some family in dreadful circumstances compared with mine, and their tax has quadrupled, or at least doubled.

I'm not looking for a moral regeneration of the English nation, but I am inclined to think that there is an increasingly wide sense of the unfairness of present policies. That will influence people's voting habits.

Let's consider your students, or the context within which you work in the university. Do you think there's been a narrowing of moral ambition about what we can seek to achieve?
Certainly working in a university has changed. My main concern in the past has been to write books, and I now find myself significantly concerned with other things. I'm spending a lot of time raising money – turning out a decent range of begging letters.

How would you assess who the standard-bearers of Conservatism will be in the 90s, and do you think Conservatism will differ in its inclinations from the 80s?
I don't know. I find the utterances, arguments and ideals of the new Right so palpably unpersuasive that I find it awfully difficult to believe that they will go on being successful. Perhaps that is merely the hope being father to the prediction, but that is my inclination. There'll be less of a craze for privatisation, I presume.

There may be something deeply implausible about the new Right, but we've also seen the historic collapse of the Bolshevik project and, as a result, socialism is in turmoil. Are we in a kind of political vacuum, with these two great false armies collapsing around us?
False armies may collapse, or may win. But my essential concern is to say who ought to win. Who ought to win are the partisans of the principle of equality. The principle of equality, to my mind, is the rationale of the Left. Needless to say, it takes on different emphases in different parts of the Left.

One of the things that struck me about your book was that there was no mention of whether there could be a different principle, for instance, not of social altruism but of environmental altruism. That could equally well be the great moral rallying cry for a lot of radicals.
I don't quite see that myself. I'm keen on defending and advancing the environment, principally in the interests of the species, and particular people who happen to be in it. But if you ask yourself what people desire, which is what matters above all, there is no puzzle. People want to live decent lengths of life, they want various other things. And in the present dispensation a lot of people are signally defeated in their desires for those things.

You've written this book, which will undoubtedly undermine your money-raising ventures... .
I got some of the begging letters out fast!

But isn't it the case that with the universities and moral philosophers in general there has been a lack of conviction?
Yes I agree with that, and I don't know why it has happened. I am puzzled how the new Right within the universities acquired an impetus and determination which has not been answered.

So, have people simply lost sight of some basic truths or decency which we just need to keep on repeating; once we've repeated them enough then, like the England football team, we'll find our form?
Well I hope that there will be some success. It will be owed in part to denunciation, appeal, exhortation, propaganda, the writing of books.

But one of the problems is that the notion of equality and justice is quite complex, and I think that people will realise that it is more complex than they thought. After John Rawls there have been other people who have written equally persuasive books, which have suggested that justice and equality are principles and ideals which need to be applied in different situations. The rise of the women's movement, for instance, has fed different principles, ideas, definitions of what equality would mean.
I see there is complexity in the development of a whole view of society, and complexity with respect to what any principle will issue in different areas. I grant that. But I don't think there is complexity in the principle of equality itself. It has the strength of simplicity.

Finally, do you think that all we are left with now is a choice between different kinds of capitalism?
Do you mean: are we left with a choice between different ideologies, all of which pay some attention to distribution through a market? The answer to that might be yes. It's conceivable there is something to be said for distribution which is market-influenced, as distinct from market-led.

So, at the end of the day, you seem to be arguing that the state of Britain is somehow out of kilter, that selfishness has grown too far at the expense of social altruism, but that probably a degree of selfishness is compatible with socialism.
Well, a degree of selfishness as a way of being self-concerned is certainly consistent with the principles of fairness, yes, and I would like to see the reassertion of the principle of fairness.●

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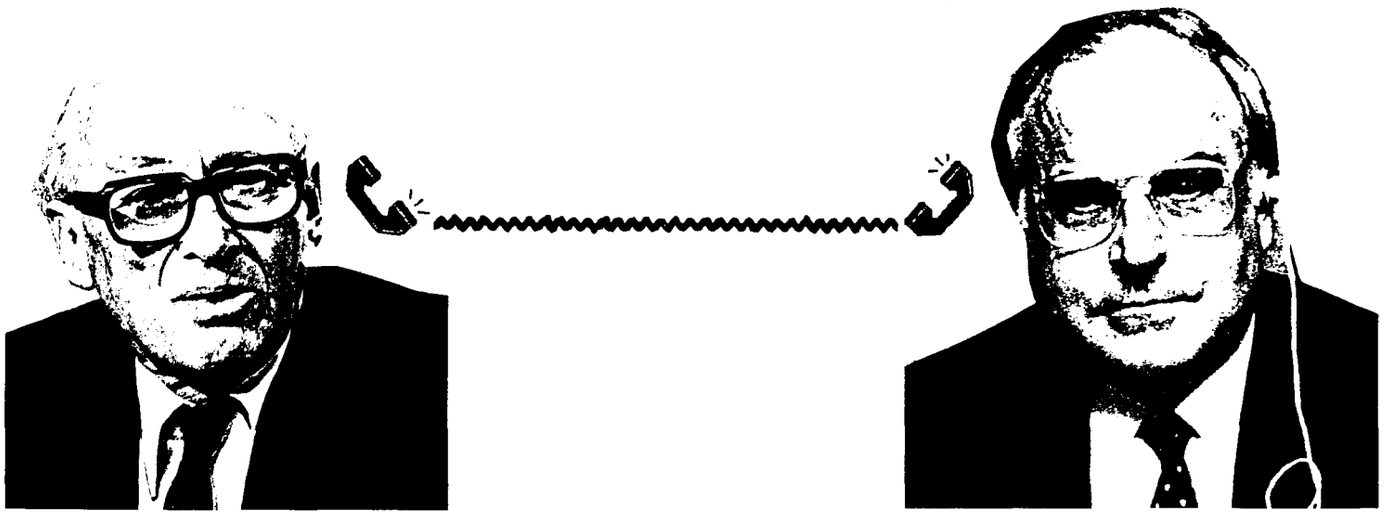

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John Lloyd on breaking Poland's political stalemate

The Polish Bull

It is easy to see Lech Walesa as a bull in a china shop; easy to shake the head and say, well, a great man no doubt, place in history secure, well deserved the Nobel, but fading now (hasn't he got stout?), resents being given a back seat by the people he thinks he created, trying to secure a comeback by demagogic methods.

You would have much cause for so saying. He is a vain, explosive and frequently incoherent public figure. He sits up in Gdansk, on the Baltic, and expects important people to come there to pay him court – including foreign presidents, like Vaclav Havel. He has fired old allies without warning on political/personal grounds, or tried to fire them. He failed to get rid of Adam Michnik as editor in chief of the Solidarity daily *Gazeta Wyborcza* only because Michnik and his colleagues had had the foresight to form an independent company. He is open about his desire to be president after months of denying it and has said, obscurely but alarmingly, that a president 'can run around with an axe in his hand'.

In early July, he commanded the presence of Solidarity MPs at the Gdansk Lenin shipyard to meet the workers, telling them that 'this is what made you'. Himself burdened or blessed with relative wealth, huge influence and world superstar status, he blasts the harassed government ministers for losing touch with the masses.

A clear case, it seems, of an inability to cope with the new rules of the democratic game. But wait a moment: take a closer view.

Walesa has formed a grouping, a kind of proto-party, called Centre Alliance. It is itself rather incoherent, but it seems to be largely dedicated to pressing for a more rapid pace of economic reform, especially privatisation, for national elections to be held soon – perhaps the spring of next year – and for the remaining communists in high government posts to be sacked. In the politics of personality which inevitably prevail when there is a movement and no parties, it is being seen as simply Walesa's election vehicle. And, of course, it is that too.

But it is forcing an examination of the crazy structure which Poland's historic compromise of a year ago has bequeathed to the country. After the roundtable talks between Solidarity and the communist government last spring, elections were allowed for only one third of the seats in the Sejm, the lower parliamentary house; the senate had free elections. Result: all the open seats bar one went to Solidarity; the agreement which was designed to keep the communists in power collapsed for lack of any sort of legitimacy; the formula, 'Their president, our prime minister', thought up by Michnik, was adopted and Tadeusz Mazowiecki, a long-time ally and adviser of Walesa's, was created premier while General Jaruzelski, the suppressor of Solidarity, remained president, more or less explicitly to reassure the Soviets.

It turned out, as we know, that the Soviets did not need that much reassurance – or at least had to learn to live without it, as Hungary, East Germany and Czechoslovakia all passed very rapidly through the non-stage of 'reform communism' towards allegiance to the movements and groups (or in East Germany's case, country) which promised liberation from all things communist.

General Jaruzelski, as enigmatic as ever behind the dark glasses and the monosyllables, has looked, as the year progressed, more and more of an anomaly, as have the communist deputies-by-right in the Sejm, many of whom are busily holding up the more radical plans to privatise the economy and passing legislation ensuring large pensions for their party's former senior officials.

It is quite clear, of course, that the government is Solidarity-led, but the governing structure is opaque, it lacks, still, a clear mandate. Only full elections could provide such an underpinning to democracy; solving nothing in themselves (as they have not anywhere in Eastern Europe these past months) they could provide the bedrock on which a solution could be found.

In particular, Solidarity itself has outgrown its great mission. Its trade-union wing, now probably smaller than the once-official communist union confederation OPZZ, is hamstrung trying to defend a government which has dramatically lowered living standards. Its neo-liberal wing is increasingly at war with its social-democratic wing. Legislation is bogged down interminably, as various factions and interests seek to dilute and compromise.

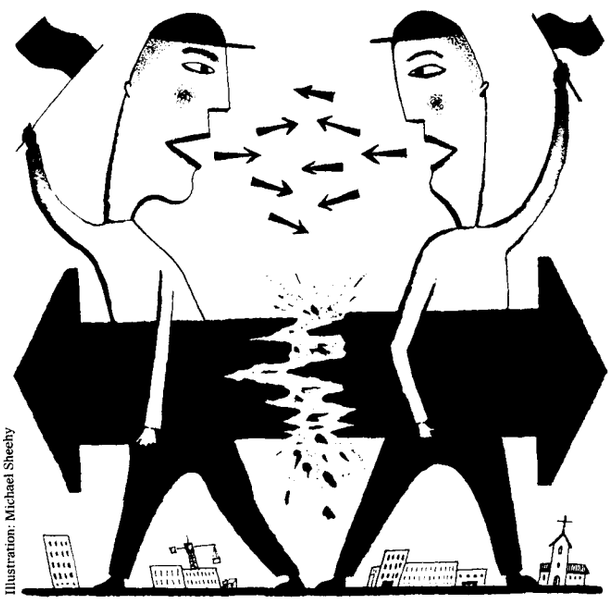

Illustration: Michael Sheehy

The 'Polish shock therapy' associated with Dr Leszek Balcerowicz, the deputy prime minister and finance minister, has had some real successes – in bringing down inflation, in stabilising and hardening the currency, even in stimulating an unexpected export boom.

What is urgently needed, increasingly so as other Comecon economies like East Germany and Hungary gallop down the restructuring road, are micro-level improvements in the enterprises. But the stasis on the political level shields managers from the consequences of the macro-level reforms.

'This china shop needs a bull, and the only available one is Walesa. He is rude, rough and changeable. But that he is a man of the people is unquestioned'

This china shop needs a bull, and the only available one is Walesa. He is rude, rough and changeable. But that he is – almost self-consciously – a man of the people is unquestioned. He is not, to be sure, an intellectual, but his instincts appear liberal and he knows that any attempt to re-establish a Pilsudski-ite autocracy would lose him and his country the support of the all-important West.

Much of the anguish surrounding his actions has been that of old friends, comrades in struggle, in imprisonment and in triumph, falling out in power. There is a whiff of the tragic about that, but it is not full-blown tragedy – Henry IV, after all, does not rank with Lear or Hamlet: Falstaff was a necessary sacrifice for the emergence of Henry V, hammer of the French. So may it be with the emergence of Lech Walesa, president of democratic Poland. We must hope so.●

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PREVIEW

Hilary Robinson is first in the queue for this year's Edinburgh Festival

Festival Fever

It's Edinburgh Festival time again. At the beginning of August, the city's walls vanish behind posters and a week or so later the Festival crowd arrives. Crowd-watching can be as entertaining as any show. The critics go round furtively, alone, in cabs. Performers are speedy from adrenaline or morose from lack of reviews and sleep. Disconsolate Glaswegians wait on Waverley Station for the last train, unable to see the late performance they wanted.

Those who pre-booked are ushered to the front of long queues, while those who didn't wonder what to do for the two hours that should have been spent watching a sold-out show. School orchestras cross the street in unison. Innumerable fringe comedians are billed as hilarious. Nobody knows how to get to venues more than 10 minutes from Princes Street, and everyone complains about the prices at the Assembly Rooms. Word travels quickly about the best shows and they sell out. Others rely on leafleting – last year one American seemed to spend his entire time in George Street handing out pieces of paper and chanting 'politics, rock 'n' roll, Shakespeare'. Those tourists who knew nothing about the festival were bewildered.

'The Festival' isn't just one festival, but six. Leading them, for most people, are the Edinburgh International Festival and the Fringe, with supporting parts played by the Film and Jazz Festivals, the delegates-only Television Festival and the biannual book festival (sorry, next year). Additionally, there is the Military Tattoo.

The merging in the minds of many people of the International Festival and the Fringe is perhaps inevitable, though they are in fact quite separate in purpose and structure. The Festival was founded in 1947 when companies were invited to the city for a season. The Fringe began the same year, formed by companies who were not invited, but who wanted to make the most of the critical attention that would be focused on Edinburgh. The same pattern holds true today.

The International Festival is comprised of events and companies from various parts of the world, all of whom are invited. The director, Frank Dunlop, travels extensively world-wide and biases his selection in favour of a different area each year. Last year it was Spain, this year the theme is the Pacific rim, though Eastern Europe is also strongly represented. The Slovak National Opera and Ballet (from Czechoslovakia) will be staging four operas, the Bolshoi will present one; the Prague Symphony Orchestra and two Czechoslovak quartets will give a number of programmes, as will the Berlin Symphony Orchestra.

These fairly mainstream events, exceptional for their performers rather than for their content, will rub shoulders with the more exciting and varied programme of companies from the Pacific rim. Three Japanese theatre companies will be present, as will the Japanese percussionist and musical performer Stomu Yamash'ta. The Korean Classical Music and Dance Company, the American Indian Dance Theatre and the Korean National Theatre will all perform in the Kings Theatre. The tradition and authenticity of the performance is being stressed without irony or elaboration, as if this conventional Western theatre were a typical and unproblematic site for such work.

Less contradiction occurs with the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, or a New Zealand theatre company, while Mike Leigh's improvisational theatre work with a Greek-Australian company should tackle the issues of global culture head-on.

The Festival programme offers a range of events which the director and his council consider to be fine examples of their type. The Fringe, on the other hand, is self-selecting. Not for nothing is it in *The Guinness Book Of Records* as the world's largest festival. The programme alone feels as though it would take half of the festival season to read and understand. The Fringe director, Mhairi Mackenzie-Robinson, exercises no artistic control or censorship. Her role is to facilitate the exhibition of any work that anyone wishes to show.

The work ranges from school productions, student companies, community groups and amateur dramatic societies through to seasoned professional performers. Comedy has been prominent for some years now, either single stand-ups or cabaret-style shows. This year, the vogue for interpretations of the life of Sylvia Plath seems to have passed, though Berkoff and Stoppard are still to be found.

Although it is smaller in terms of the number of events, the International Festival is by far the more expensive, as it has to take full responsibility for the programme. This year it is receiving £620,000 from the Scott-

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ish Arts Council, £650,000 from Edinburgh District Council (EDC) and, for the first-time £150,000 from Lothian Regional Council (LRC). A further £600,000 comes from business sponsorship, leaving about £1.5m to be raised by the box-office. The Festival has a permanent staff of 14, including four part-time consultants. Ticket prices are traditionally low by national or international standards.

The Fringe gets its largest income from the participating companies. They are charged £190 each. For this they get a listing for their event in the programme and the daily diary; monthly bulletins, advising on the timetable of action; the services of the box office; and a kind of match-making service between venues and events. Other funding comes from Edinburgh District Council (£22,000) and the Scottish Arts Council (also £22,000). Lothian Region puts £3,180 towards the community-oriented Fringe Sunday – a free jamboree in Holyrood Park. The Fringe permanent staff numbers four.

Much fuss was made in the conservative Edinburgh-based press, particularly *The Scotsman*, in 1984, when the newly-elected Labour administration in the city froze its funding to the Festival, and comments about the Festival's élitism were blown out of proportion. This clouded the reasons for the freeze – a need to assess economic priorities after years of Tory rule – and the fact that all EDC spending was frozen at the current rates. It also ignored the fact that the Festival had been tolerated rather than encouraged by the Tory administration. Both the International Festival and the Fringe are now on three-year funding from the now firmly established Labour administration, thus allowing them to plan ahead with more confidence. This in itself indicates support for the Festival and faith in its positive role in the city.

That mid-80s crisis had one highly beneficial aspect – the public discussion of the purpose and benefit of the Festivals. Strangely, though, no surveys of the economic benefits of the Festivals to Edinburgh have been carried out. The Festival itself suggested figures of £30m – £50m until 1987, when arts minister Richard Luce publicly mentioned the figure of £80m. The Festival office admit that they don't wish to question too closely where the figure came from. This vagueness contrasts with the situation in Glasgow, where a number of surveys into the economic and social effects of the year of European culture are under way.

Back in Edinburgh, the current Lord Provost, Eleanor McLaughlin, is in no doubt as to the cultural benefit to the city. She believes that the people of Edinburgh have a wider level of cultural awareness than many in the country, and that this raises their expectations and improves the quality of life. She rejects the suggestion that certain types of culture appeal only to the middle classes. The only group who she considers to have no direct experience of the festivals are what she succinctly described as 'the spam belt' – a bland, deeply conservative, non-risk-taking section of the middle classes who like the idea of the Festival, but won't take part.

The feeling among Edinburgh's politicians has changed in recent years, the Provost pointed out, from thinking that the Festival does no harm, to believing that it actively does good. There are still some choices to be made, however. An analysis of who attends what events and where, and what the knock-on social and economic effects of the Festival might be, are badly needed. Widening the appeal of the Festival even further with outreach activities and a recognition of the diversity of Edinburgh's population should also be high priorities. This year's Festival should justify the Provost's optimism, although with Nicholas Parsons making an appearance, it has to be said that there will be some spam on the menu.●

Ennio Marchetta: The amazing origami man

Fringe Highlights

Simon Fanshawe Headlines: Taking a break from *That's Life*, the man described by *The Sun* as 'another limp-wristed leftie' returns to his natural habitat with a new one-man comedy show. Assembly rooms. August 10-25, 8.30pm.

Black Mime Theatre *Superheroes*: A streetwise spoof of comic-book characters, incorporating physical and vocal acrobatics. Pleasance. August 9 – September 1, 1.00pm.

Ennio Marchetta: Performing in Britain for the first time with impressions that range from Pavarotti to Jessica Rabbit. Lightning character transformations are achieved by the use of origami costumes. Pleasance. August 10 – September 1, 11.30pm.

Rumillajta: Internationally acclaimed Bolivian folk ensemble play the music of the Andes. Reid Concert Hall. August 14-27, 7.00pm.

Nina Simone: The great diva of jazz plays live in concert. From *My Baby Just Cares For Me* to *Young, Gifted And Black*. Queen's Hall. August 27, 7.30pm.

Tom Robinson: Robinson re turns to the Edinburgh Festival with a new cabaret, *Moonlighting*. Assembly Rooms. August 12-18, 11.45pm.

Red Shift Theatre Company: Veteran Festival company and Fringe First winners return with their latest production, *Lulu*. Obsessions, games, darkness and humour combine in this adaptation of Wedekind's 'sex tragedies'. Pleasance. August 13 – September 1, 6.00pm.

Jo Brand: Dead-pan comedienne teams up with Patrick Marber and James Macabre for a show of comedy and music. The Gilded Balloon and Theatre Studio. August 10 – September 1, 8.30pm.

Bob Boyton Puts the Boot in: Straight-talking comedy from one of London's most popular stand ups. Hill Street Theatre, August 12-25, 7.00pm.

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Global Hypocrisy

Shelagh Young is deputy editor of The Green Magazine.

Tim O'Riordan (*MT* July) wants things to change. I want things to change. When freedom is defined as the right to pump out as much carbon dioxide as you want as long as you can afford, then you know you live in a sick society.

O'Riordan summarises the problem neatly: scientists cannot provide definitive proof of the probable effects of global warming, and although they can show that car exhausts contribute a large percentage of the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide to the atmosphere, they cannot prove that your Fiat is fucking up the planet for your children.

O'Riordan is right: politicians keen to retain their seats in parliament are hardly likely to rush to restrict the private car-user, or do anything which will upset the pleasurable process of consumption. After all, we are talking about trying to persuade a generation whose faith in the scientific community has been severely rocked by early exposure to *Tomorrow's World*. Personally, I'm still waiting for the household robot that was going to lighten the domestic load. And they expect me to give up my car?

Yes, we do need a new form of politics – but global citizenry? Give us a break. The prospect of floodwaters washing large sections of Bangladesh right out of our hair (no more worries about starving Third World peasants) is probably viewed with glee by extreme racists in the West.

And as current Third World 'natural' disasters are usually revealed to the fascinated, caring British citizen in single-column, inch-high, inside-page newspaper reports, trying to extract a carbon tax on the basis of potential Third World suffering would seem to be a lost cause.

O'Riordan even calls for 'leadership of a high order' before, in his last few sentences, he suggests that ideologies have to change. Why do experts on the green scene always leave ideology till last (or leave it out altogether)? For me it is a bit like falling asleep during a double feature and trying to match the finale of the second film with the opening of the first.

I used to wrestle with a form of political thought that, if not exactly taking the role of ideology for granted, certainly tried to analyse the state of contemporary culture (carbon-dioxide-spewing hatchbacks and all) using ideas about ideology. Now I struggle with green crusaders whose sense of urgency has apparently erased their political memory banks.

Let me put it like this. Feminists looking for an outstanding leader to change the way gender differences are perceived are few and far between. No amount of legislation can fundamentally alter our common-sense understanding of the world.

And even if we believe the world is doomed, it will take more than a few brave politicians to make us vote for restrictions of what current common-sense knowledge holds to be our freedom.

Shoving the question of ideology to the bottom of the agenda is a mis-handling of the hottest potato in the green debate. Clear, concise information on global environmental problems is still needed, but let's not leave it at that.●

Porn Laws

Sona Osman is a barrister with an interest in women and race issues.

It was with great interest that I read 'Pornography: Desperately Seeking Consensus' (*MT* July). I would like to focus on the analogy which has been drawn between legislation outlawing racial discrimination and the incitement of racial hatred and proposed legislation to prevent sexual discrimination and the incitement of sexual violence/hatred.

The question is whether this is either a good, or even useful, analogy. I am firmly of the opinion that it is neither. While there are similarities between racism and sexism, they are not the same things and the parallels are dangerous ones to make.

While the Race Relations Acts and the various Public Order Acts may have raised consciousness among white liberals around issues of racial discrimination, the extent to which the legislation has served the black community remains questionable.

Certainly it has not eradicated racism – nor, arguably, has it even begun to. Indeed, the various Race Relations Acts have generally been preceded by the tightening of immigration controls, aimed at preventing black people from entering the country.

My own view is that while successive British governments control the influx of black people to appease their racist voters, the race-relations legislation is cynically used in an attempt to appease the emerging British black population.

In practice, the shortfalls of the legislation are best shown by contrasting the case of Michael Abdul Malik with that of John Kingsley Read. In the former, Malik, a prominent member of the Racial Adjustment Action Society, addressed a meeting at Reading in 1967. He was convicted of inciting racial hatred and sentenced to 12 months' imprisonment.

In the latter case, Read, the leader of the British Movement, addressed a meeting in June 1976 in which he called black people 'niggers, wogs and coons'.

At his first trial for incitement for racial hatred the jury could not agree. At the retrial the judge told the jury that the terms 'nigger, wogs and coons' were jocular, and that at school he was known as 'nigger'. Not surprisingly, with a summing-up like that, the jury acquitted Read.

These cases show both the perverse way in which the legislation can be used, and its limitations within the context of an establishment and society which may not share the objectives of the framers of the legislation. The level of xenophobia shown by the people who appeared to support Nicholas Ridley's recent outburst leaves little confidence that the acquittal of Read would not happen again in 1990.

How then can we be sure that any proposed legislation would work in our interests as women? Indeed, how many women feel less discriminated against as a result of the Sex Discrimination Act of 1975? Perhaps the real key is education rather than legislation.

However, my concerns go beyond the analogy. Many other difficult questions need answering: Who will define incitement to sexual violence/hatred? What will the sanctions be? Will it be a civil wrong or a crime? And will men be able to use the offence of incitement to sexual violence/hatred against women?●

Better By Design

I don't agree with Dick Hebdige's view of the national press (*MT* June), which he tacitly projects against some vague notion of a golden age of Fleet Street. But when it comes to factual matters, he is, quite simply, wrong.

To take only design, the area with which I am concerned, he writes: 'Identity (of the national press) here as everywhere else is relational – an effect produced through product "differentiation" and market "placement" and increasingly the "look" becomes the distinguishing factor. Hence the skittish spate of redesigns (eg, *The Guardian, The Sunday Telegraph* magazine 7 *Days*)... .'

We felt at *The Guardian* that the paper maintained its lucidity and good writing, with the addition of much stronger all-round reporting, but that the design had, through years of appalling printing tribulations, grown fuzzy and undirected.

We wanted a design which expressed the virtues of *The Guardian*'s editorial content and did not simply tag along with the customs of the hot-metal years. Our redesign was timed to coincide with the move to a new print centre and the new technology, about which Hebdige has nothing to add but the usual voodoo-ridden prejudices of non-journalists: that somehow computers mean that writers lose control of their words to a sinister editing process.

The opposite is true. Access has vastly expanded the ability of journalists to find out what is happening in all parts of the paper minute by minute. Hebdige is quite right not to check how newspapers actually do things: facts don't always sit easily with theory.●

Michael McNay, London

Big Mouth

Following Tony Blair's revelation in the 'Back Page' (*MT* July) that he used to play lead guitar for a band called Ugly Rumours, I was wondering when we could expect the country-wide tour of the now celebrated musical duo: Nicholas Ridley warbling Morrissey's ditty *Big Mouth Strikes Again* accompanied by Dominic Lawson twiddling buttons on the tape-recorder, now that the former unexpectedly finds himself with some free time.

Perhaps an aria from *Gotterdämmerung* would be appropriate as an encore.●

Lola Montes, Walthamstow

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Sexual Tensions

Having read your pornography roundtable (*MT* July), I was struck by the lack of intimacy and, perhaps more surprisingly, the lack of solidarity between the participating women. But while differences of opinion might appear unhelpful to the 'politics of consensus', the fact is that they are there and enable the complexity of the issue to be more fully addressed.

Subsequent readings revealed further points, primarily to do with the use of the term pornography in a way that obscured more fundamental issues. First, the role and contentious nature of sexuality and pleasure in contemporary Western culture. Second, that the search for definitions of what is intrinsically 'pornographic' has as its end aim not open discussion but legalistic suppression. And third, the unexamined nature of much of the terminology.

'Objectification' and 'degradation', for example, are used as if they only apply to a small spectrum of images involving women, and are not important underpinnings for images our culture holds in reverence (such as the ideal and the iconographic, which are certainly modes of objectification).

I would like to make one final and perhaps more disturbing observation. If it can, after all, be agreed that in this realm of euphemistically-termed 'male entertainment' women's bodies become the subject of a visual violence, then in a far less openly acknowledged way the consumers (the absent men) are no less observed.

They are the ones thought to be susceptible (through some unknown mechanism) to its worst efffects. Presumably, everybody else is immune, and therefore on the 'safe' side of the sociological observation. It is this *judgment* of certain groups which makes me wonder if the only tension in this debate is between men and women.●

J Dunn, London

Porn Policy Review

One of Clare Short's correspondents ('Pornography' *MT* July) complains that her husband brings pornography back from Berlin. An immediate response is: well, he would, wouldn't he? Fat chance of finding it in a British city.

Britain's political climate prevents many people from making informed judgments about images of sexuality. The heavy hand of censorship works through complex legislative, economic and cultural mechanisms.

It is not even possible to produce strip-cartoon eroticism in Britain without tortuous negotiation of images at the point of presentation. Compare this to the material available in Japan (though censorship of sexual images does prevail), continental Europe, Scandinavia and the west coast of the USA.

Britain's cultural establishment wants it all ways. A new business-minded arts establishment is closed to 'difficult' working-class, black and gay producers, but will use the sex-appeal of some classical performers to catch targeted audiences. Young women and men are persuaded to sell sexual services or popular expressions of their sexuality in the 'free market', but face the condemnation of an unholy alliance ranging from right-wing Catholics to left-wing feminists.

More diverse representations of sexuality and fantasy – not less – facilitated by a government that knows what it's doing is one answer. Page Three and 'top-shelf' fetishism would become less of an issue and might disappear completely.

A consensus on pornography should be placed within a European context where high and low cultural definitions of art and trash, quality and popular, pornography and eroticism, are less class-based than Britain. Gay people also need to be drawn into consultation. And a cross-party commission on sex education should be formulated.

A future government could then establish a Ministry for Women's Affairs and a Ministry for Culture to deal with the question of images of sexual arousal in arts, media and broadcasting.●

Mike Weller, Penge

Weighting Lists

Careful analysis is vital for a health policy ('A Picture Of Health', *MT* July). Observing Heseltine's pioneering use of statistics to design the original formula by which Whitehall 'calculated' the 'proper' expenditure for each local authority, it was immediately clear that housing waiting lists formed no part of any Tory assessment of housing need.

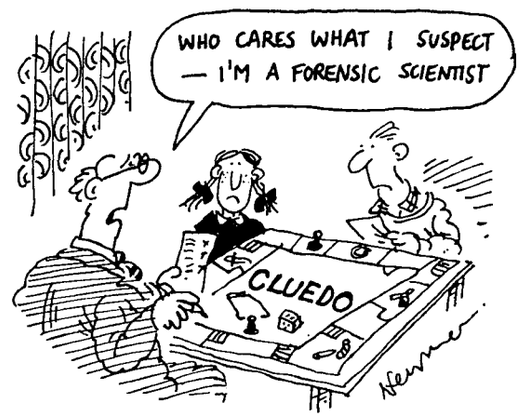
Today, no account is taken of hospital waiting lists in assessing medical needs. Though the College of Health Ltd regularly publishes hospital waiting lists, there is no municipal recognition of such data.

Nor is there any calculation of the local aggregate charitable rate reliefs enjoyed by private hospitals, or their disproportionate use of state-trained and pensioned medical personnel. How about some clawback of relief?

The moral seems to be to use statistics (to our design and selection) in order to demonstrate the realities of the medical and housing needs of the vast majority of the population. Perhaps, if real income and expenditure in both state and private-sector health were known, local health groups could publicise the relevant comparisons and disparities.

After all, why should I continue to voluntarily donate my blood if Margaret Thatcher, with her three private operations, is able to prioritise the use of all donated blood, operating theatres and medical expertise?●

D Shepherd, Hendon



Cartoon: Nick Newman

Suburban Myths

Chris Hamnett's description of gentrification, polarisation and political change (*MT* July) is really about inner London. In the centre, the future may be one of electoral volatility and uncertainty for Labour, but equally interesting and perhaps more important for the long term is the situation in outer London and the suburbs.

In places like Croydon, Enfield and Hillingdon there remain sizeable numbers of skilled workers, while many of those connected with the financial and private service sectors are in relatively low-status occupations and are not wealthy.

These classes might be stereotyped as white, home-owning Tory voters, forming the hard-core of Eng-er-land supporters. But there is no reason why they should always vote Tory, even if they no longer think of themselves as working class. Thatcher captured their support, and Labour could profitably turn its attention to them, quite apart from its attempted comeback in the inner city.●

Paul Mitchell, London

Parties Matter

Alice Rawsthorn (*MT* May) claims that the multinationals can be, and are, strongly influenced by consumer preference. And her example? Sports shoes! Now that really is economic science. What about steel, coal, major construction works, railways?

And consumer influence? It would be an amazing feat to prove consumer influence here, and in many other fields. Of course, consumers have always affected production to some degree, but not anywhere near as much as Alice Rawsthorn would have us believe.

There is a thesis among the Left, and particularly in the Communist Party, that a CP is no longer necessary, since a 'network' or 'association' can be just as influential. If that aim were achieved, the multinationals would carry on laughing all the way to their banks.●

H Frankel, London

Editorial Note:

We welcome your letters to add to discussion. Please send them to *MT* Letters, 16 St John Street, London EC1M 4AY. Brevity means you are more likely to be published. We reserve the right to cut.●

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BREAKING DOWN THE BLOCS

A new Europe is in the making. **Edward Mortimer** examines what it might be like

On the past, frontiers seldom changed except as a result of war, and regimes were seldom overthrown except by violence. But 1989 saw the communist regime collapse throughout eastern Europe while serious violence was confined to one country – Romania – and among the results of that collapse is the removal, without violence, of at least one inter-state frontier: that between the two Germanys.

There is a good chance that the frontiers of the Soviet Union will also be modified, with the Baltic states reclaiming their independence and Moldavia rejoining Romania. The Soviet Union may even break up into separate national republics (though to predict that that will happen without serious violence would be tempting fate). Meanwhile in western Europe, all frontier controls between France, Germany and the Benelux countries are to be abolished under the Treaty of Schengen, signed in May, and many (although Margaret Thatcher is of course not one of them) hope that this model will be followed in due course by the whole European Community.

No less important than the change in inter-state frontiers is the dissolution of what political scientists call the 'state system' which has prevailed in Europe since 1949. (Strictly it was completed only in 1955, with the arming of both German states as members of opposing military alliances.) Not that there is or ever was any true symmetry between Nato and the Warsaw Treaty Organisation (WTO). Nato is a voluntary association of sovereign states, ratified in most cases (and since the mid-1970s in all) by democratically elected parliaments.

WTO was simply a formalisation of Soviet control over east-central Europe, in which the peoples of that region had no say at all. Nato existed for six years before WTO, and could in theory continue to exist long after its demise.

The truth is, however, that while Nato was not a response to WTO it was a response to the pre-existing reality which WTO formalised: the Soviet Union's strategic and political dominance over east-central Europe, which most west Europeans saw, rightly or wrongly, as a threat to their security. WTO itself may or may not now be formally dissolved. But the reality behind it has clearly gone. The Soviet Union has lost, or has renounced, its dominance over east-central Europe and it is now very difficult to see that dominance being restored in the short term whatever the outcome of power struggles in Moscow.

The Soviet Union, or Russia, will remain a very large country, dwarfing the rest of Europe. It will continue to have vast reserves of manpower and a formidable (even if much reduced) array of modern weapons, including thermonuclear ones. As long as its political future is uncertain it will have to be seen by other Europeans as at least a potential threat. But its withdrawal from east-central Europe makes that threat very much less direct and tangible to west Europeans. The underlying premise of Nato has thus been greatly weakened if not removed; while the reason for keeping large numbers of allied troops in Germany is rapidly vanishing into the mist, now that Germany is no longer to be the front line between two armed camps but a united and sovereign state.

Francois Mitterrand was the first allied leader to draw this conclusion publicly when he predicted, at the end of the July Nato summit, that all 50,000 French troops in Germany would come home. British political leaders have, with one or two exceptions, been more cautious and less imaginative. Invited by the Royal Institute of International Affairs to articulate a British response to the dramatic changes in eastern Europe, George Walden, a Tory backbencher, called for slashing the defence budget by 'between a half and a third' and spending the money on education. That is, to say the least, well ahead of government policy. Paddy Ashdown, leader of the Liberal Democrats, responded to the same invitation by calling for a democratic European federation with a federal government and a federal constitution (which would have the incidental advantage of placing limits on the arbitrary power, alias 'sovereignty', of national government in Britain). The response from the Labour Party, however, is still awaited.

Most west European leaders would like to keep some American troops in Europe, as an earnest of America's involvement in European security and thus a deterrent to anyone tempted to breach the peace. But once the Russians agree to leave east Germany (as they surely must, for their position as uninvited guests in a united Germany would be so uncomfortable as to be untenable) it seems likely that German public opinion will ask why the troops of the Western allies, who are also former conquerors and occupiers, are still around. The

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European Community (EC)
Full member countries:
UK
France
Spain
Greece
Italy
Luxembourg
Belgium
Netherlands
Ireland
Germany
Portugal
Denmark

EC Associates:
Cyprus
Turkey

Countries likely to become full members of EC in the long term:
Czechoslovakia
Hungary
Poland

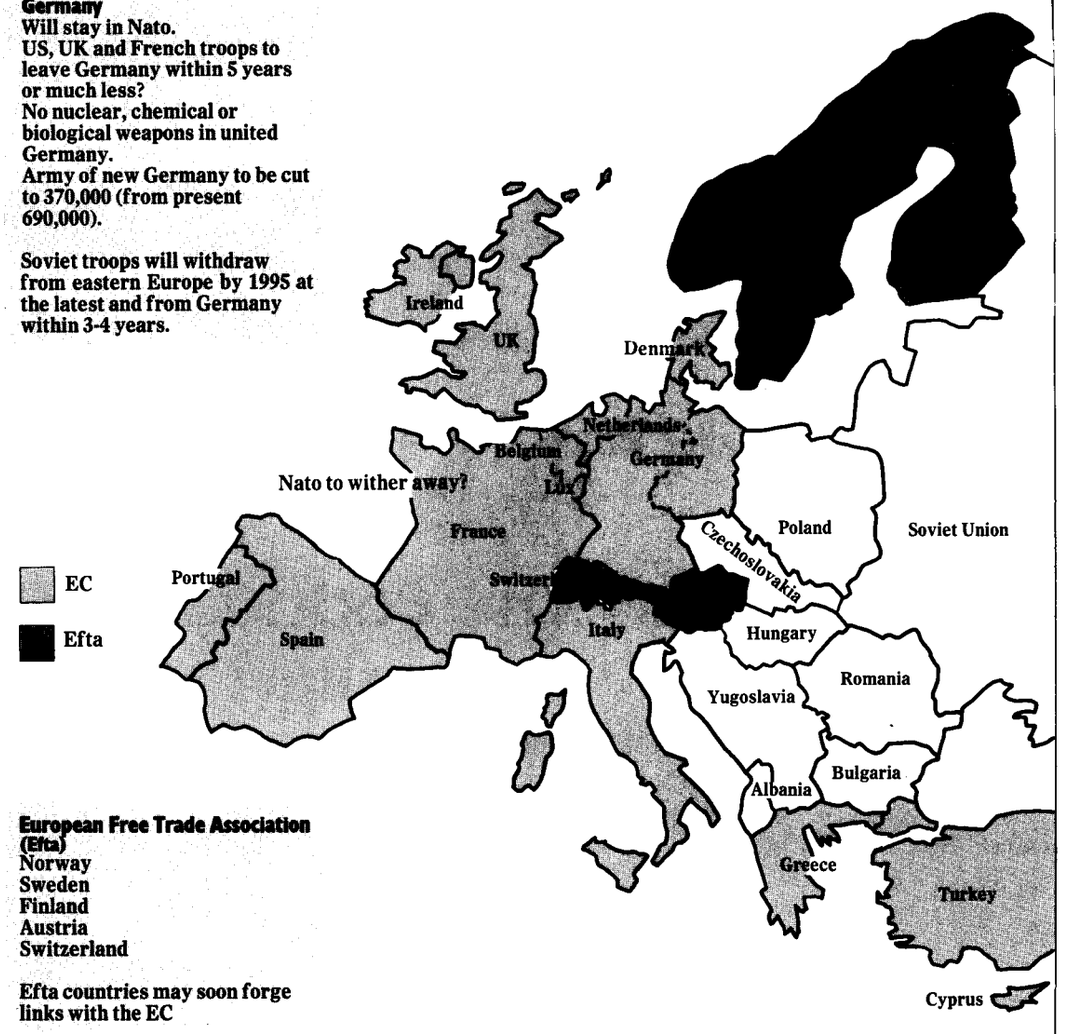
Countries whose future relationship with EC is unclear:
Romania
Bulgaria
Yugoslavia
Albania

Warsaw Pact
East Germany
Czechoslovakia
Hungary
Soviet Union
Romania
Bulgaria
Poland

East Germany will leave Warsaw Pact and united Germany will be in Nato.
Hungary wants to leave Warsaw Pact.
Czechoslovakia might leave Warsaw Pact.

Germany
Will stay in Nato.
US, UK and French troops to leave Germany within 5 years or much less?
No nuclear, chemical or biological weapons in united Germany.
Army of new Germany to be cut to 370,000 (from present 690,000).

Soviet troops will withdraw from eastern Europe by 1995 at the latest and from Germany within 3-4 years.



European Free Trade Association (Efta)
Norway
Sweden
Finland
Austria
Switzerland

Efta countries may soon forge links with the EC

suspicion will be that they are there as guarantors not of German security but of German good behaviour, and that will not be acceptable.

Yet if the Americans are asked to leave Germany they may well be disinclined to stay in Europe at all, and other European states may well find it awkward to invite them, since that could be taken as implying that they care less about their own national sovereignty than the Germans do. It is thus quite possible that in five years' time, say, the Atlantic alliance will have reverted to being what it was at the very beginning, before the Korean War: a treaty of mutual defence, without a military organisation 'on the ground'.

Possibly its military structure will have been replaced by a purely European one, constructed either by the European Community (which more and more voices are urging to take on a 'security dimension' as part of its drive for political union) or by the Western European Union (WEU), an existing though little used defence pact originally formed by France, Britain and the Benelux countries in 1948, later expanded to include a rearmed Italy and West Germany and later still to bring in Spain and Portugal too.

These countries are all Nato members and all situated geographically (as well as in political terms which are rapidly losing their meaning) in *western* Europe. It may therefore turn out to be easier to assign defence functions to WEU rather than to the EC itself. That would allow east-central European countries to seek gradual integration into the EC (which is what many if not all of them want) without being automatically integrated into Nato at the same time, which most of them realise would be unduly provocative towards the Soviet Union. For whatever defence organisation emerges in western Europe will surely present itself as part of a remodelled Nato, in order to dissuade the Americans from turning their backs on Europe altogether.

Defence organisations matter as insurance against things going badly wrong. Whether they do go wrong depends much more on political and economic developments. The collapse of communism as a legitimising ideology, and of Soviet power as a plausible military threat to the West, may owe something to the much-vaunted steadfastness of Nato's 'forward defence' posture, but ultimately owes far more to the economic and political success of postwar western Europe in comparison with the abject failure of communist regimes to deliver prosperity.

'With or without a military dimension, the EC seems certain to be the central institution around which the new Europe will be organised'

It may be that that success is due purely to the fact that west European states were restrained from fighting each other, and from interfering too much with the economic activities of their citizens, by their common fear of communism and their consequent acceptance, more or less grudging, of American hegemony. But virtually everyone in eastern Europe (and most of those in the West who have stopped to think about it) believe that it also has something to do with the EC. Inter-state co-operation, which failed so abysmally in Europe before the second world war, is thought to have succeeded in postwar western Europe because it was based on economic integration, enabling citizens of different states to compete and collaborate economically across frontiers and so to discover common interests which cut across traditional national boundaries.

Most west Europeans, it seems, wish to build on that success by strengthening the EC and carrying the integration further. East Europeans, for their part, want to get in on the act. With or without a military dimension, the EC seems cer-

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tain to be the central institution around which the new Europe will be organised. Currently it is fending off new applications for membership (Turkey, Austria and Cyprus are already in the queue) until it has completed the present stage of integration.

But at the same time it is negotiating with the Efta countries (Austria, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland) on the formation of a so-called European Economic Space, which if it means anything will mean that those countries conform to EC rules in order to be part of the single market, while having at best a token role in deciding what the rules are to be. That seems unlikely to be acceptable for very long, if at all. It is a fair bet that most if not all of those countries will decide, well before the end of the century, to seek full membership. As they are all both prosperous and democratic, the EC has no long-term reason to refuse them. Iceland and Norway are Nato members. The other four are self-proclaimed 'neutrals', but in the absence of active East-West conflict this may prove to be no more a problem for them than it has been for Ireland, especially if (as suggested above) the EC does not involve itself directly in the military aspects of security.

The former communist countries of east-central Europe will have fewer political doubts about the desirability of EC membership, but far greater difficulty in developing their economies to the point where they could cope with the effects of full integration into the west European market. So far the EC's efforts to help them economically have been strong on rhetoric and weak both on hard cash and (what may be even more important) on allowing access to their products, especially agricultural products.

But western Europe cannot afford to sit back and watch these new democracies fail: after all the triumphalism of 1989 the moral and political damage would be too great. The EC will have to negotiate generous association agreements with them, and it will be very difficult not to hold out the prospect of eventual full membership as the ultimate goal.

The new Europe will thus be organised around the EC. Inside it, some states will be ahead of others on the road to integration – as has already happened with the European Monetary System and is now happening with the abolition of frontier controls – but all will be committed in principle to the same goals. Outside it, all European states will be to a greater or lesser extent dependent on it, and virtually all will be aspirants to membership, though for some that will be a much more immediate and practical prospect than for others. But it will not be possible to define Russia as 'European' in this sense. The sheer size of Russia makes it necessary to view it as a partner rather than a potential member of the EC. What is vital is that it should be seen, and should see itself, as a partner rather than an enemy.

'If the Americans are asked to leave Germany they may well be disinclined to stay in Europe at all'

To that extent the relationship of Russia and the US to Europe is similar, though not identical. Both are children of Europe which have burst its geographical bounds, outgrowing and coming even to dominate their parent. Both feel themselves to be deeply involved in Europe, and it is Europe's vital interest to cultivate that feeling rather than rebuff it: nothing could be more dangerous for Europe than the combination of a resentful Russia and an indifferent US. Hence the need for a wider European framework in which both can cooperate with the EC on more or less equal terms.

The Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), long seen as a relic of old-style 1970s detente, has now come into its own because it provides at least the outline of such a framework. At the CSCE summit in Paris this November, a start will be made on endowing Europe with new 'security' institutions which will not be primarily military (although monitoring arms-control agreements will be an important part of their task) and will not directly supersede the old military blocs. Their primary purpose will be to give both the US and Russia a role in the new Europe which is not dependent on the existence of the blocs or on a continued confrontation with each other.●

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Universal Principles

Charter 88 has helped to put citizenship on the map. **Geoff Andrews** worries about how citizenship is thereby reduced to constitutional reform

Liberty and equality misunderstood

'I have always held the suspicion, or the prejudice,' writes the novelist Ian McEwan, 'that politics is the enemy of the imagination... I have marched and talked for CND, but I have never joined it. I have voted Labour, and even canvassed in some general elections, but I have never joined the party. Likewise, I have voted and spoken for the Greens, but never joined... And yet, I am a committed, paid-up supporter, council member and speaker for Charter 88.'[1]

I have never written a novel. But I have been to enough political meetings over the last decade to share McEwan's view that Charter 88 is a very different political phenomenon from what has gone before. For one thing the Charter, which has socialist origins in the *New Statesman*, is not inhibited by the traditional structures of the Left. Its leaders (or 'spokespeople') are not held 'accountable' to the grassroots membership ('signatories') for their actions. There are no delegates, mandated by wards to annual conferences. There are no annual conferences.

The Charter exudes a very different culture. There is a sense of amateurism about its approach to politics. Its lack of an internal democratic structure, you feel, is probably because they haven't had time to get round to it, what with moving offices and keeping up with Labour's ideological gymnastics on constitutional reform. It only recently held its first public event, which took place on Bastille Day to commemorate the modern origins of citizenship, 201 years after the French Revolution.

The Charter certainly has an imaginative and attractive way of denouncing the government and expressing its beliefs. Charter signatories do not 'struggle' for their demands on demonstrations. They hold 'vigils', regularly attended by the rich and famous, and lead delegations and petitions to Whitehall. Politics is fun with the Charter, as the shining faces of Prunella Scales, Bamber Gascoigne, Timothy West and Billy Bragg remind us, 'parading (as the recent Charter mailing puts it) the demands on the steps of St Martin-In-The-Fields'.

The Charter's appeal is not to a mass culture, but to an informed public opinion, the sort that watches and appears on *The Late Show*, or read and write for the *New Statesman* and *Marxism Today*. It has a large number of lawyers and academics among its leading spokespeople. You won't come across many local Charter groups in Lancashire, but you will find two in Oxford, which supplies almost a third of the Charter's council.

The Charter is an attempt to 'break the mould of British politics', and, like the SDP, it seeks the moral high ground in order to do it. Moreover it has what the SDP lacked, a big idea – that of 'universal citizenship'.

Chartists are very self-assured in their condemnation of what's wrong. We know where we stand with the Charter. We are all in the same boat. We are subjects in search of 'inalienable' rights and freedoms that would be guaranteed by a written constitution and a Bill of Rights.

But even more striking than the different culture and style of protest is the politics itself. The Charter is a celebration of the individual. It is individual freedom, not the collective will of the proletariat, that is the driving force behind the Charter's demands. We Charter signatories are indignant at government interference with journalistic freedom, shocked at unrestrained police powers, incensed that the state can tap our telephones.

The Charter's concern with the individual has been instrumental in forcing the Left to start reclaiming the idea of liberty from its long identification with the economic freedoms of Thatcherism. Roy Hattersley has made this a personal crusade, his latest Charter of Rights being a more flexible (he argues) alternative to a Bill of Rights. Rights are back on the Left's agendas. And in this discussion of rights it is political and civil rights that take precedence: social rights have moved backstage. In the Charter's long list of 'inalienable rights', entitlement to welfare or a minimum wage are not among them.

So, are we Charter signatories all 'born-again liberals'? This would seem to be the case. Indeed, with its omission of social rights and its preference for the claims of the individual rather than the community, the Charter has more in common with 19th than 20th-century liberalism. Above all, it promotes the rule of law. 'Our central concern is the law. No country can be considered free in which the government is above the law.'

The Charter may be a liberal document but it is not spineless in its demands. It does not believe in tinkering with the system. Nor does it mince its words. 'Three hundred years of unwritten rule from above are enough... (The freedom) which we have enjoyed has been too dependent on the benevolence of our rulers. Our freedoms have remained their possession, rationed out to us as subjects rather than being our own inalienable possession as citizens. To make

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real the freedoms we once took for granted means for the first time to take them for ourselves... The time has come to demand political, civil and human rights in the United Kingdom.'

The cause of our 'subjecthood' is therefore made quite explicit by the Charter. Without a written constitution we have no guaranteed freedom. We have no defence against authoritarian governments which are able to enforce regular curtailments of civil liberties. Sovereignty – ultimate power – is not our possession, residing instead in our paternalist parliamentary system. Consequently, according to the Charter, our status as citizens will only be realised by a new constitutional settlement.

However, despite the promise of a new culture of politics and its role in articulating a new goal, I have, on reflection, two disputes with the Charter.

My first problem is that Charter 88 only tells us part of the story of citizenship. It expects too much from its constitutionalism. Of the core citizenship values, the Charter lays great emphasis on rights, but does not talk of duties, the other side of the citizenship equation. The significance of citizenship duty is not merely obedience to the state, but comment on the extent of social cohesion that exists among individuals in their different communities. In a period in which the crime rate reaches a new peak, intolerance towards the gay community grows in the wake of the moral panic over Aids, divisions between the white and the Muslim communities deepen in the aftermath of the Rushdie affair and the critical future of the planet requires more than ever an ethic of solidarity, there is an urgent need to rebuild a sense of community.

The crucial importance of duty in this context is that it implies a commitment, an obligation for individuals themselves to solve the problems within their communities. It puts local, and now global, well-being at the centre of citizens' concerns, and above that of self-interest. Perhaps this isn't the purpose of the Charter. But why then the claim to 'universal citizenship'? In fact, leading Charter spokespeople have entered the debate on citizenship duty, but they have done so on negative grounds, joining with others in denouncing the idea of the 'active citizenship' concept, the creature of Douglas Hurd.

The purpose behind the 'active citizen' idea is clear enough. The conservatives were coming to be seen, in a period of declining support, as the party of social division and heartless individualism. This was not helped by Thatcher's silly proposition that 'there is no such thing as society'. Hurd's active citizen was an attempt to show that Conservatives do see individuals as part of a community. The sense of community would be retrieved through the encouragement of charity-giving and other good works. But at the same time there would also be a duty to uphold the principles of the enterprise culture, the sole guarantor of freedoms, by standing on your own two feet.

Hurd's intervention prompted a wider debate on the responsibilities of the citizen, which was taken up by both the Speakers Commission on Citizenship, in its investigation of how an ethic of civic virtue could be promoted in schools and community groups, and also the Prince Charles volunteer army scheme.

In Charter 88's response in the pages of the *New Statesman*, Anthony Barnett, the Charter's co-ordinator, derided the active citizen as a conscript to the state or 'vigilante' constructed by the government to divert attention from 'real' citizenship demands (ie, those concerning constitutional reform). The concept of the active citizen was 'a spoiling operation, to make sure that the more fundamental concepts of citizenship are displaced... Active citizenship is not simply an evasion of the undemocratic realities of today, it is a provocation: an attempt to seize the initiative on citizenship so that citizenship can burn.'[2]

The problem with this outright dismissal of the active citizen is that, with no alternative discussion of civic duty proposed, the Charter, which sees itself as the representative of the Left (and everybody else for that matter) on citizenship, is in danger of disengaging itself from the essential discussion of why divisions exist within communities. It does not consider the processes through which people learn to get along with, and show respect for, each other.

In a recent letter in the *New Statesman*, Barnett, advertising the Charter's latest teachers' 'vigil', even took issue with the proposed appearance of citizenship on the national curriculum: 'How are teachers supposed to do this (ie, teach citizenship) if their pupils are to remain subjects?'

Here I have to declare an interest, as I currently teach something called citizenship as part of the A-level politics syllabus. The problem for me is not that my teaching is impaired by the lack of a constitution, but that 'Citizenship' as it appears on the syllabus is confined – as it is with the Charter – to limited questions of constitutional reform. I feel much happier teaching citizenship (though it is not described as such) to my other 16-year-old sociology students, where we talk about the future of the planet, gender, class, racial divisions and different cultural identities.

In setting themselves up as the 'true' representatives of citizenship in its limited constitutional form, the Charter has put constraints on the debate itself. In fact it is outside the Charter's terrain that we find rumblings of the need to foster a sense of community if social divisions are to be ended and global catastrophes avoided. This has been the experience of Live Aid, Comic Relief and One World Week, all of which have hinted at a popular citizen culture

'In this discussion of rights it is political and civil rights that take precedence: social rights have moved backstage'

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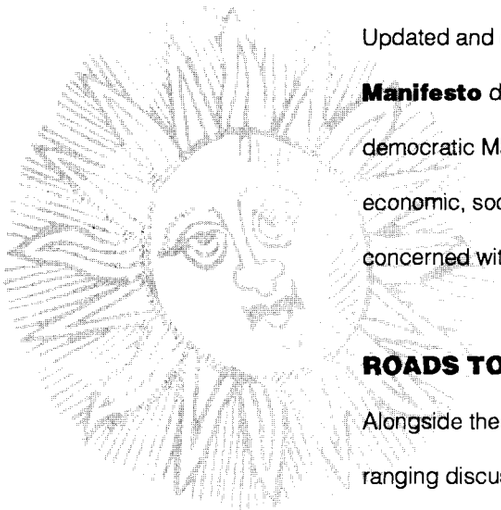

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ROADS TO RENEWAL

Alongside the development of the *New Times* project, the Communist Party is now engaged in a wide-ranging discussion about how to renew its tradition in order to give the most effective expression in everyday life to the politics envisaged in the *Manifesto*. **Roads to Renewal** has been published to give a platform to the variety of views within the Communist Party about its future. It makes fascinating and challenging reading as the new alignments of the Left begin to unfold.

FUTURES

A key event in the discussion on the creation of effective vehicles for *New Times* politics will be the **Futures** event. Taking place in London on the Friday night and all-day Saturday of the weekend October 26/27, the **Futures** event will be new, it will be internationalist and it will be pluralist. Support groups for the event, to feed in ideas from right across Britain, have already been initiated and the themes of this most exciting venture are beginning to take shape. If you would like to be involved in any capacity, to offer advice, or simply be kept informed of developments, please get in touch.

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which goes beyond the narrow concerns of the Charter.

Similarly, Prince Charles has expressed a concern about the breakdown of community. His volunteer community army, aimed directly at working-class youngsters, is intended to bring back a sense of self-esteem to disaffected youth. Most of the Left's reponse to this is to see it as cheap labour. The only remedy is real jobs. But in a society in which only 12% of school-leavers go on to higher education, young people desire and deserve more than the prospect of a secure dead-end job.

Charles' concern about the waste of human resources and potential highlighted in One World Week has thrust him forward as the New Model Citizen. As Dick Hebdige put it in his stimulating profile of Charles (*MT* October 1989), Charles, 'the champion of the underdog', 'feels personally responsible' for 'what's gone wrong'. 'He is tormented by the spectacle of social division, the waste of human and natural resources.' Citizen Charles, 'in his expression, gestures and vocal intonations... sometimes seems to literally embody the submerged crisis of values which gives the lie to Thatcher's tired miracle.'

My second problem, which relates to the first, is that *despite* the historic compromise between liberalism and socialism that is apparent in the politics of the Charter, and beneath the attraction of a new kind of political activity, there is a sense of déjà vu in the priorities of its leadership. It is easy to get the impression that the Charter is serving a more direct function as a focus for socialist removal. The Charter has recently formed alliances with END and the Socialist Society to promote the European Citizens Assembly. Lord Scarman may have emerged as a leading Charter advocate, but the Liberal Party's long-standing tradition of local community (or 'active citizenship') politics is conspicuous by its absence from the language and culture of the (liberal) Charter.

It is the language that is the most striking déjà vu element of the Charter. Fewer people have signed the Charter than buy the *New Statesman* every week, yet it still projects itself as a 'citizens' movement'. Why not 'a pressure group for constitutional reform', as most commentators in fact refer to it? After all, the Charter performs the essential functions of a pressure group: it seeks to lobby parties and MPs; it asks for signatures to a petition. It attempts (recently with considerable success) to influence political debate rather than gain political power. Its council and executive members are not elected.

However a pressure group is a single-issue concern, which does not fit in with the universal, all-embracing ambition of the Charter. This universalism identifies the enemy as the constitutional (rather than capitalist) 'system', the solution as undiluted, uncompromising citizenship. Not 'active citizenship' or Labour's half-baked list of constitutional reforms (in fact the most significant proposals put forward by any party for over a century) but 'real' or 'full' citizenship. According to the Charter, citizenship without a written constitution is pernicious nonsense.

'Without a written constitution we have no guaranteed freedom. We have no defence against authoritarian governments'

There are some absurd consequences which arise from the Charter's universalism. One is the contention that the Oxford University student and the Brixton teenager will acquire, through a written constitution, the same relationship to the state and the same status as empowered equals in a fully-fledged citizenry. On the contrary, it is easily conceivable that we will have a much improved democratic and civil libertarian political system if the Charter's proposals become reality, but it is certain that we will still have major social divisions.

There is also of course, for socialist Chartists, myself included, an irony in this undiluted, uncompromising idea. The good society which previously depended upon social and economic transformation is now to be achieved through the extension of civil liberties.●

1 Ian McEwan, *The Guardian*, April 30, 1990.
2 Anthony Barnett, *New Statesman And Society*, September 22, 1989.

This article is based on an essay to appear in *Citizenship*, published in the autumn by Lawrence and Wishart.

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desire AND POWER

Desire and power lie at the heart of a complex personal and political puzzle. Taking us into the maze, **Kathy Acker** gives a seven-step guide to desire and language. Negotiating the dramas of the bedroom and the kitchen, **Maureen Freely** reflects that although power and desire go hand in hand, this doesn't mean that men will always be on top. **Gilbert Adair** steps into the dangerous anonymity of the night and reflects on gay men's enduring fascination with cruising. Standing back from the love that doesn't even feel the need to speak its name, **Richard Dyer** finds out why heterosexuality is not just a private affair. **Andrea Stuart** ends our journey as she turns her back on Marlon Brando's motorbike.

Speech, descriptive or analytic, about any act is not equivalent to that act. Therefore, language whose subject is sex differs, perhaps radically, from the acts; the facts; from sexuality in all its multitudes of appearances. To judge morally, especially to heap legal prosecution, upon the verbal representation of an act as if it is the act itself, is dangerous, for language is not clear glass through which the world is seen. Language, being partially material, is slippery, evasive with regard to meaning. Language shifts between truth and falsity.

We understand neither our own sexualities nor our relations to language. And yet we judge. And condemn. Perhaps we are condemning our own unknowable humanity. We speak about sex and sexuality so easily, as if our words objectively represent. Certain feminist politics, based on assumptions or presumptions about the objectivity of language, lead only to muddle.

Severo Sarduy, in a short essay on Gongora in *Written On A Body*, a collection of his essays, defines language as metaphorical. 'Metaphor,' he says, 'is that zone where the texture of language thickens' so that 'the remainder of the sentence is returned to its original simplicity, its innocence.'

So in language, truth and lie (hyperbole, image) are interdependent. Sarduy states that in language truth lies exactly where the hyperboles, the images built by the imagination, meet. If reality or that which lies outside language is itself a discourse, this reality must also incorporate both truth and falsehood. With regard to representation of human perception. In other words: we see through a glass darkly.

In language, there is always a distance between signified and signifier. Between the act and the word. Language is always metaphorical. (This formula must be more complicated, for any act, as soon as perceived, has entered the verbal realm whereas any occurrence of language is an act.) According to Sarduy, poetic language is that language in which the distance between signified and signifier has been enlarged.

Poetic language lies as one lies down with a lover.

Poetry is the proper discourse for the representation of sexuality. In the sexual realm, many, if not all, of the human intercourses meet: fantasy, the imaginative, memory, perhaps especially childhood memory, desire, need, economy, power. The so-called factual language of the essay cannot begin to represent such complexity. The ambiguities of the language which is the most metaphorical, which is continually slipping into falsity, represent the

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breadth and depth of the possibilities of the sexual world.

Language whose subject matter is human sexuality so resists objective or factual discourse that essays in which the essayists try to analyse sexuality (to reduce sexuality to understandable, simple models), if read as psychological descriptions, place their readers in strange lands, perhaps those of horror.

'Poetry,' Sarduy states, 'by its very nature... eludes (eludere) all messages.' Poetry eludes messages because its words break down as they approach meaning.

For it is only as words deny each other, break down, as messages turn on themselves like snakes eating their own tails, that that which is invisible and silent can appear. Here poetry and sex meet. For the realm of sex is holy. Silent. Identity is lost at the point of orgasm.

'Here lyes a shee Sunne, and a hee Moone here,
She gives the best light to his Spheare,
Or each is both, and all, and so
They unto one another nothing owe,
And yet they doe...
They quickly pay their debt, and then
Take no acquittances, but pay again;
They pay, they give, thay land, and so let fall
No such occasion to be liberall.'
(from John Donne's *Epithalamions*.)

Poetry is the language of love. Poetry is the language which plays as fully as possible, even at the edges of danger, by oscillating between signifieds and signifiers, between meanings and silence (that obscurity which is humanly unbearable).

Both poetic discourse and sex are processes of transformation. In poetry, silence changes into meaning, meaning into silence. Sex is one movement between life and death. Insofar as we fear death (the loss of identity), both poetry and death are frightening.

Perhaps it is the aspect of play, perhaps the proximity of death, that occasions social disdain toward both sex and poetry. Both sex and representations of sex are treated as social diseases; poets are the least respected and the most poorly paid of all the public language-shapers.

The attempt to reduce sex and sexuality to simple models for the sake of analysis, for the sake of meaning, for the good of society, could be an attempt to reduce play to moral action. Some essayists want human sexuality to serve feminist political concerns. The problem is that sexuality neither tends nor desires to serve. Sexuality observes its own necessities and these necessities, the necessities of the transformations between existence and non-existence, are deeply connected to what is human: joy.

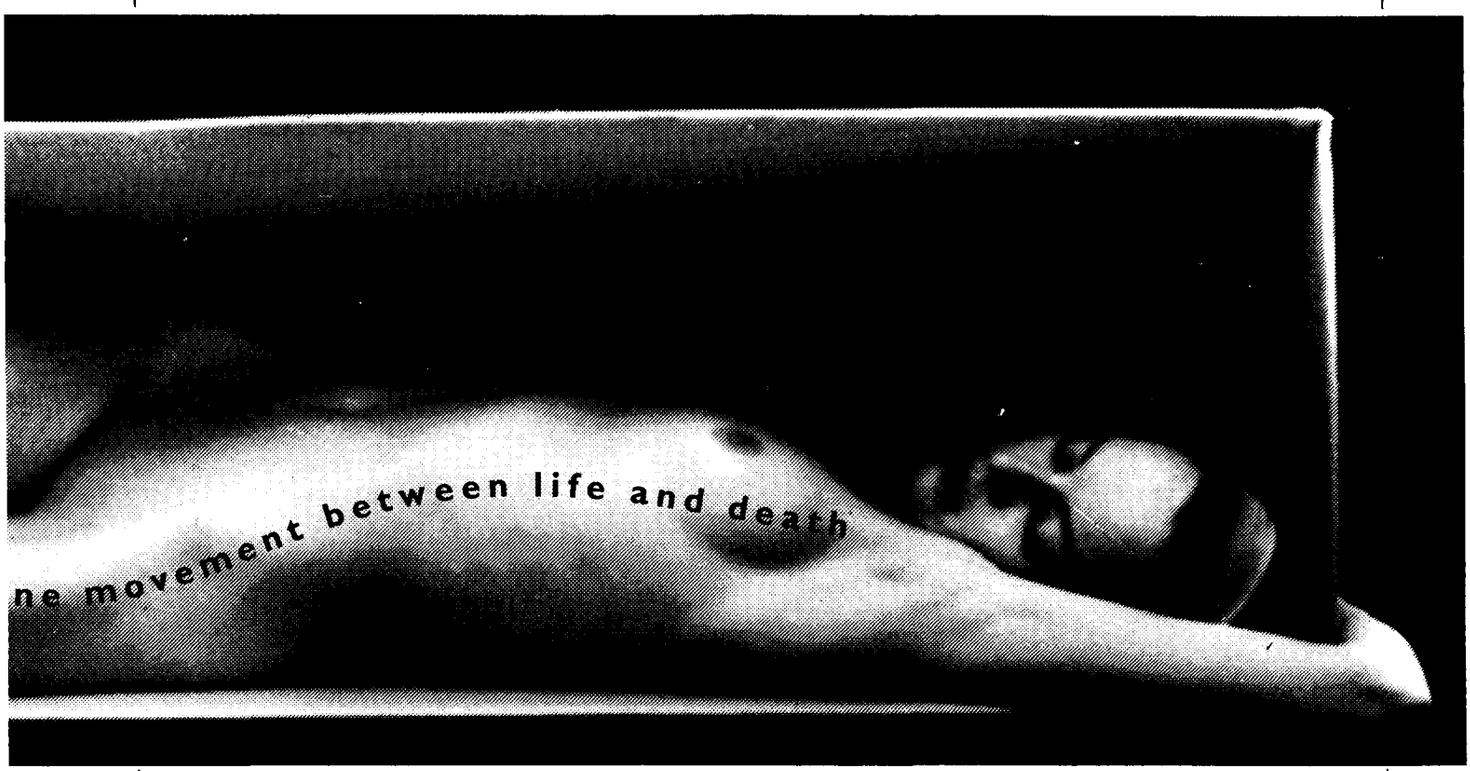
To moralise and to litigate against sexual play might be to reduce humanity to mechanism.

Of course we cannot, nor should we, live in the amoral universe of sex. Of play bordering on chaos. We need rules. Many, perhaps most, rules in our society are sexist. The discourse proper to analysing and fighting against sexism might not be sexual. For the moment discourse becomes sexual, it becomes volcanic, muddied, too hot to handle, proper only to the instable and irrational islands Ovid loved.

Let the essayists, the theorists, the politicians battle, not for equality, but for equal opportunities and respect for all sentient beings. We need that. And so that we won't be scared but will see all the infinite and wondrous and dangerous possibilities of humanity, let the poets sing of sexual love.

'And by this act of two phenixes
Nature again restored is,
For since these two are two no more,
There's but one Phenix still, as was before.' (John Donne.)●

Kathy Acker's new novel *In Memoriam To Identity* is published by Pandora.



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Maureen Freely explains why power and desire won't be parted

War Of Positions

As the war against the patriarchs drags into its third decade, we still aren't sure what we want to do with the world after men have unconditionally surrendered. Is there a possibility for a new kind of love to exist between men and women that will permit them to respect each other and work together as a team, or will any attempt to co-operate with phallocrats lead to the undermining of equality, and defeat?

The fashionable view in the bunkers is that all these things will sort themselves out in a century or two so long as we make changes possible by fighting today for a woman's right to determine her own destiny. Maybe we will drift effortlessly towards a form of matriarchy in which men will continue to make themselves useful as studs, gladiators and playmates. Or maybe men and women will soon be so similar in nature that we will be able to call them androgynous twins. Your guess is as far-fetched as mine.

There have always been more serious thinkers who are not prepared to let nature take its course. A recent example is Sheila Jeffreys, who argues, in her polemic *Anticlimax*, that heterosexuality constructs desire in such a way that it eroticises power difference. The only solution, she says, is for us to say no – for the time being – to heterosexual desire, and then to construct homosexual desire in such a way as to eroticise equality and mutuality. In the meantime, we must reconstruct male sexuality in such a way as to sever the link between power and aggression and sexual pleasure. Then – who knows – we might be able to get out our bricks and mortar and reconstruct heterosexual desire so that it eroticises equality and mutuality, too.

I am never quite sure how seriously I am supposed to take people when they make grand utopian recommendations. In a way, though, I admire her boldness. I can see that she is able to think about the future in ways I cannot because she refuses to waste any time arguing with anyone who disagrees with her. She has a vision.

So let's forget about sociobiology. Let's not worry about logistics. Where there's a will to create mandatory sperm services, test-tube baby factories, and a legal system that outlaws the missionary position, there's a way. Let's concentrate instead on her most interesting suggestions, namely, that liberation will not be possible for women (be they straight or gay) so long as they find power difference sexy, and that we need to work on ways of getting the same kind of kicks from mutuality. Detractors may call it bambi sex, but Sheila Jeffreys suggests we would all prefer sex that 'does not leave us feeling betrayed'. Mutuality sex will engender trust and so make it possible for couples to be supportive and work as a team.

What she and her fellow emotional engineers are trying to promote, in other words, is a love relationship that is simultaneously safe and exciting. An appealing idea. Is it feasible? Walt Disney would say yes, but those of us who have been to Orlando know that it is safe because it is totalitarian and the wrong kind of exciting because it is ersatz.

What they want is to redesign the pleasure principle so that it stops reinforcing the male value system. What a good idea. But what a shame that it is based on such a simplistic understanding of men and women. We can never hope to change anything if we persist in throwing around such unwieldy generalisations. No relationship can exist without some degree of mutuality at least some of the time. Not even a traditional heterosexual relationship. If all the heterobed had to offer was one three-minute act of subjugation after another, the women of the world would have left it long ago.

There is more to heterosexual sex than the struggle for power, and there is more to a heterosexual relationship than the sexual act. Erections do not last for ever. The score in bed does not dictate what you do in the kitchen. After the traditional hetero-woman has yielded to her brutish ejaculating husband, she does a lot of other things without having to pause to give him the time of day – having children, for example.

Heterosexuality might be an institution and as such reconstructed and deconstructed, but a relationship that takes place inside that structure cannot be analysed in the same way because it exists in time. It is subject to change. Even if we see the traditional hetero-relationship as a relentless power struggle – and I do not – we must still concede that not all the victories go to the one who has the penis. Sometimes the women win, too. There are constant shifts in the balance of power and in the distribution of tasks. It is based on flexibility and trust. If you're locked into a vicious power struggle, you can never cede ground because you risk losing it for ever. If you trust the other partner, you can cede ground because you know that the next day the roles can be reversed and you'll get twice as much ground back.

This is mutuality in action. But is mutuality ever safe? In a traditional hetero-relationship, it at least *feels* safe. It means that there are times when you can call a truce, put down your arms and get the dinner on the table. In relationships where there is some lip-service given to the principle of equality and some degree of economic parity, mutuality means something different. It means that domestic life is a constant negotiation and renegotiation of privileges, responsibilities and duties – all in the name of balance and fairness. It happens in both heterosexual and homosexual households. It can be a good and noble process, but it is never a peaceful one. And I can't see how it will ever be any different.

Even when men and women accord each other boundless respect, they will still have to share the earth's resources. They will still have to decide, probably through argument, which spaces are public and which are private. And even when they have severed for ever the link between desire and power, even if neither party is ever on the bottom or the top, there will always be the possibility of infidelity. There will always be the possibility of other, less dramatic but equally damaging breaches of trust. There is no such thing as a sexual relationship, or indeed any relationship, which protects the people involved from being betrayed. That, unfortunately, is what makes them exciting. That is why love will continue to hurt even after all things are equal.●

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Gilbert Adair watches men circling men

Dangerous Pleasures

Whatever else it might be, Thomas Mann's *Death In Venice* remains the literary masterpiece of cruising. This was substantiated in striking fashion by Visconti's (fairly faithful) adaptation. The governing principle of the film might be said to be the eroticised dynamics of eye-contact. The scene, for example, in which Aschenbach initially sights Tadzio is articulated through a long, slow panning shot that traverses the salon in the Hotel des Bains until the camera (and, by extension, Aschenbach's vision) comes to rest on the object of its desire.

Following the recent publication of an article of mine about the Polish youth who had inspired the character of Tadzio, I was chided by some of my more militant gay acquaintances for having described Mann's novella as 'the Tristan of homosexuals'. What I meant

was that, just as Wagner's opera is universally viewed as the apotheosis of heterosexual passion (in Western culture), so *Death In Venice* – precisely by virtue of the fact that Aschenbach dares to do no more than 'cruise' Tadzio and dies, not in a swooning consummation of love and death, but alone and unloved – may be regarded as an apotheosis of the homosexual variety.

This is not to suggest that homosexual desire is fatally destined to end in failure and humiliation. Only that its psycho-mythological emblem, its heraldic motif, so to speak, is not the ecstatic conjoining of two naked bodies but the abyss of mutually conflicting tastes and longings that must for ever separate them. That, at least, is how homosexual literature tends to portray the situation (notwithstanding regular and foredoomed endeavors to produce 'positive' texts, like Forster's *Maurice*). It is also how many homosexuals mythologise themselves (notwithstanding, too, an angler's propensity to mythomania where conquests are concerned).

Consider Roland Barthes's *Incidents*, a slim, posthumously published collection of autobiographical fragments. In its final section, Barthes relates what he calls (with ironically factitious chic) his Soirées de Paris: abortive encounters with male whores, unrewarding sessions at a pornographic cinema and lonely vigils on the terraces of the Flore and the Deux-Magots during which he allows the ambiguous fauna of Saint-Germain-des-Prés to brush up against him and pass on by.

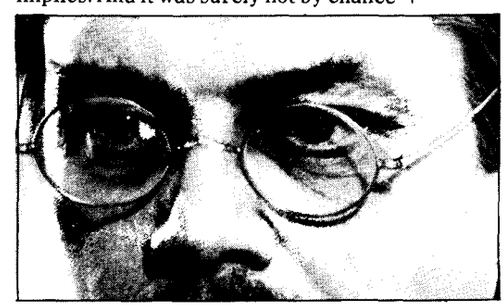
Only very rarely, and (at least in these texts) never successfully, does he endeavour to exploit his desire, perhaps scribbling down a telephone number for some vague and, one suspects, eternally deferred rendezvous (homosexuality: the love that dares not speak its name but doesn't mind leaving its number). Otherwise, he seems content to be a mere observer, a hunter with his eyes alone and, as befits a semiologist, an indefatigable interpreter of signs.

Cruising, then, perhaps the quintessential expression of homosexual desire, is less a moveable feast than a moveable fast, a species of erotic semiology, an exchange of glances replacing, as frequently as it foretokens, an exchange of caresses. As the etymology of the word intimates (a cruise being a pleasure voyage embracing incidental ports of call instead of gravitating towards an ultimate destination), it's the intransitive movement itself, the nocturnal and deliciously furtive promenading in parks, on street corners and inside public lavatories, that procures the authentic frisson.

The insatiable cruiser would not care, naturally, to 'go home alone': that is regarded as an intolerable indignity, notably by the still very young. But it's equally true that, if his hopes are pinned on picking someone up eventually, he would rather that it didn't happen just yet. There is a ludic dimension to the activity – as in any other game, one prefers to win, but to win too quickly would be to negate the thrill, the very *raison d'être*, of the pursuit. Curiously, by a kind of social Orwellianism, rampant these days, in which words come to signify the reverse of their literal meanings (a gross and garrulous boor, for example, is judged at heart to be 'shy'; there are few individuals more discourteous to the general public than PRs), the cruising homosexual is, above all, identifiable by the edgily standoffish distance that he takes care to maintain from his fellow cruisers. Watching them circumnavigate one another in a park is rather like watching the courtship of statues.

What is most striking, though, particularly when one recalls that the phenomenon also lingers on in societies in many ways far more liberal than ours in sexual matters, such as the United States, Scandinavia and France, is the weird aura of nostalgia that seems to hover about cruising. It's a nostalgia for a period when to be homosexual of necessity meant being an outcast, a pariah, a 'man of the shadows'. Such shadows are long dying. Many homosexuals of otherwise irreproachable liberal convictions find themselves even now privately clinging to their 'difference', to their immemorial 'otherness', to what one might describe as the insecurity blanket of homosexuality as an offence.

In the past, before the Wolfenden Report (Wolfenden! A name drenched in nostalgia for the British homosexual), the gay community was invested with something of the quality of a secret society, complete with the esoteric signs and symbols, the crypto-Masonic rites and rituals, that such a conception implies. And it was surely not by chance



that Alan Hollinghurst's novel, *The Swimming Pool Library*, already set in the early pre-Aids 80s, further distanced itself from the present by quoting extensively from the memoirs of an elderly homosexual aristocrat; nor yet by chance that it became a bestseller.

The more homosexuals fight, and rightly so, for the freedom of sexual expression, the more, paradoxically, some of them have begun to regret the tang of personal danger that would season such an expression 20 or 30 years ago. Just to be homosexual during the mid-50s was, by legal definition, to place oneself at permanent risk – the risk of imprisonment, of physical aggression, of social and professional disgrace.

There exists a similar risk in the 90s, to be sure, but to a much less intense degree. And, by the wilful courting of that danger, to go cruising now on, let's say, Hampstead Heath, perhaps represents a (no doubt unconscious) desire on the part of the homosexual to prolong the pre-Wolfenden past, to render it, as it were, present.●

Glibert Adair's new novel *Love And Death On Long Island* is published by Heinemann.

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Richard Dyer puts the word 'heterosexual' among the pigeons

Straight Acting

Heterosexuality is a public position which seems to be experienced as a purely private matter. A man I see occasionally usually chides me for thinking (which I don't) that people are either straight or lesbian/gay. Human sexuality, he points out, is much more complex than that; we are all (with a meaningful glance) different mixtures of hetero and homo. When this man's marriage broke up, he ricocheted within months into another, while still retaining his complex admixture of public-toilet fumblings.

Vita Sackville-West and Harold Nicholson are the most famous example of a married couple whose sexuality expressed itself in lesbian and gay bits on the side. No doubt this was as well known to cognoscenti then as it has become to devotees of high gossip now, but to the world at large their successful marriage was an affirmation of heterosexuality.

I once had a relationship with a married man. We lived in different towns and moved in rather different worlds, but in neither case were we so far apart that we did not have acquaintances in common. When it came to an end, he said the reason was that he'd discovered that people he knew, knew about us and he couldn't stand the thought of being known to be homosexual.

It's when there is a gay/lesbian aspect, as in examples like these, that it becomes evident that heterosexuality has a public dimension, it is not just a private affair. Yet the man in the first case undoubtedly experiences his sexuality as purely a matter of rich personal diversity, while Sackville-West and Nicholson, like other such couples (by no means rare), I suppose tried to be decent in their dealings with their lovers and felt that, after all, 'everyone' knew. The fact that their public acts in fact affirm heterosexuality in its most rigid form seems to escape them. At least my married lover had the grace, the wretch, to see and articulate what the loss of his heterosexual position – the fact that everyone treated him as heterosexual – would mean in terms of status, security and respect.

Heterosexuality as a social reality seems to be invisible to those who benefit from it. In part, this is because of the remorseless construction of heterosexuality as natural. If things are natural, they cannot really be questioned or scrutinised and so they fade from view. Such naturalisation often characterises how we see, and don't see, the powerful; how they see, and don't see, themselves.

We are often told – in the pages of this journal as much as anywhere – that we live in an age of diversity, that there is no longer any privileged subject of history/politics. You could have fooled me. It is true that swathes of the Left feel that white, working-class men are no longer the undisputed heroes of our forward march, but, within and without that narrow culture, being heterosexual is still an undisturbed identity. Although the Left now gamely includes lesbian/gay issues in its marketplace, the centrality of heterosexuality as a reference point and assumption remains secure. It is not that one is asking anyone to stop being heterosexual (well, I'm not asking that at any rate) or saying that heterosexuality is wicked. But we do need to try to see it, not just move within it as the air we breathe.

We need, in other words, to make heterosexuality strange. A student once told me that they all knew I was gay because I kept using the word 'heterosexual'. Just try dropping the term regularly into sentences and see how relentlessly the assumption of heterosexuality is built into our thought processes. Then we might be able to start considering how heterosexuality, like homosexuality, has been socially constructed.

Let me make a start on this by proposing two models, and a forgotten alternative one, of heterosexuality. I'll call

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Illustration: Beverly Levy

these the Jane Austen, Barbara Cartland and New Woman models of heterosexuality. The Austen model proposes heterosexuality as the coming together of opposite but complementary qualities within a context of moral equality. Thus he may have too much pride, she may have too much prejudice, but both can learn from the other, acquire respect for the dignity of pride and the energy of prejudice, modify and merge in a perfect marriage at the end of the book.

While Austen may not question the relative economic status of women and men, they are clearly seen to be humans of equal worth. In her novels, though not in my 'Austen model', personal and moral qualities may be found equally among women or men (women can be proud, men prejudiced), but generally in this construction of heterosexuality, masculinity and femininity themselves are held to be inherent opposites, requiring one another to create a perfect whole, the heterosexual couple.

The Cartland model also believes in the inherent differentness of female and male, but here the context positively luxuriates in power difference. The excitement of heterosexuality here is precisely the coming together within a relationship of such thrilling power differentials; it is him having exultant mastery over her, her blissful yielding to him, her thrilling manipulation of him from below, his charmed giving way to her attentions, that make heterosexuality tick.

The New Woman model (I can think of no hapless author to pin this to) is much less common. It proposes that it is what a man and a woman have in common that can unite them in heterosexual happiness. It is the delight in finding someone as intelligent, committed or energetic as oneself, or sharing the same sense of humour or a love of walking or an interest in science. Here anatomical and temperamental sex/gender differences are negligible, though no doubt nice; what matters is to meet one's match.

As Ruth Brandon has recently pointed out, in *New Women And Old Men*, the late-19th, early-20th century women who tried this out didn't get very far with the male raw material available. An ideal of union through sameness is often derided ('How boring it would be!') even though research shows that on the whole heterosexuals marry people of the same social status as themselves who look rather like them. What the New Woman model sacrifices is not only difference but power. It doesn't at the moment have much of a hope.

The baffling question is the one that Freud unaccountably never thought to ask: what do heterosexuals want? I used to assume that it must be the Austen model. It obviously wasn't the New Woman one but, I thought, surely nobody could really want the Cartland model. Within a situation of real freedom and equality (as real as we can expect to make it), I can see that lovers may play all sorts of games, turn and turn about who cuddles and is cuddled, who bites and is bitten. But the Cartland model does not even seem to want that basic context of freedom and equality, it wants the full weight of coercion and inequality in heterosocial relations reproduced in heterosexual ones. That's what I could not believe heterosexuals wanted. Now, however, I wonder.

I recently looked at some dances for heterosexual couples in musicals, clear embodiments of what the heterosexual characters in the films want and surely some indication of the state of desire in those with whom these dances are so beloved. As long as the dance suggests courtship, dating, getting to know one another, then the New Woman and Austen models prevail in the way the dancers relate to each other with their bodies. But once the dance starts to connote passion and sexuality, once the dark secret world of fucking is on the agenda, then Cartlandesque difference and domination are uppermost (and this is above all true of more recent and explicitly sexual dance films like *Dirty Dancing* and *Lambada*). All the pizzazz of identity and equality, all the exhilarating grace of complementarity that the women have in the courtship dances is diminished or lost entirely in the dances of consummation. It seems that when it comes to sex, heterosexuality cannot countenance sameness and equality.

Ethel Spector Person has argued that sexuality is a far more crucial mainstay of male identity than of female. Part of me is uneasy about her argument – does it just reproduce the idea that women are above sex? – yet there is something about it that rings true. Men may make all sorts of concessions to women's demands for sharing and equality, but there seems to be something uniquely threatening about making concessions about how you have sex. It's as if the heterosexual man's body, and indeed his penis, are his last-ditch defence against merging with the feminine, ceasing to be a male altogether. If he can't assert himself there, he's lost. And if women want men, then that's the price they'll have to pay. So the Cartland model rules.

As always with images and representations, reality is more complex and fluctuating. The actual practice of heterosexuality must to some extent outstrip the cultural models available to it. Yet it would be absurd to assume those models are of no account whatsoever. It will only be by learning to see them that we will be able to rethink and refeel sexuality, that we will be able to change the sexual order itself. As long as we don't, heterosexuals will continue to be locked into expectations of joy through power and lesbians and gay men will continue to be bits on the side of society.●

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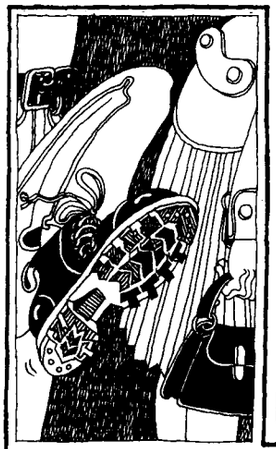
BOB Boyton

THIS MAN IS A SICK MARXIST COMIC SAYS TEDDY TAYLOR M.P.



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Andrea Stuart waves goodbye to pouting rebels

Nice And Sexy

When I was younger, I had a thing for bad men. The badder the better. Bastards, I was sure, were more fun. I had so fallen for the bad-man hype that I replaced my first, adorable boyfriend with my own pouting, brooding rebel without a pause. He was unreliable, inconsiderate and unfaithful but I knew he could change and I was the woman to change him. But now that I am older and wiser, my idea of an attractive man has changed. I have realised something that the resurgence of debate about the 'new man' has missed, something momentous and earth-shattering: nice men are sexier.

Being 'mad, bad and dangerous to know' has been a prerequisite for the desirable male for such a long time that we tend to find this hard to believe. And in fact much of the recent debate around the new man has really just been a rerun of that much older question: 'can a good man be sexy'? Or in other words: is it possible to find a man you can bear the idea of living with and continue to lust after as well?

There are a number of confusions that we have to clear up in order to answer this question. The first is the confusion of the new man with the nice man. With the rise of the 'new man', women were gobsmacked. He seemed to be the answer to a feminist prayer. He could make a nifty nine-course Japanese meal and change the baby's recycled nappies all at the same time. But something was wrong. We knew we should fancy him desperately, and more than that we knew we should be grateful. So why didn't we? And why weren't we?

Our doubts were justified when we discovered that this paragon of virtue was just as likely to bonk our best friend as any other model of manhood. It was all revealed to be a masquerade designed to sell New Wool jumpers. The new man wasn't the same thing as the nice man at all. He was all style and no substance. It wasn't so much a question of the new man as one of new manners.

Instead of questioning whether it was the 'nice' or the 'new' part that women were rejecting, some men have taken the new man's lack of pulling power as an excuse to stop trying. 'Men,' a smug male acquaintance recently observed, 'are just into being themselves now.' Translated, this meant that it was suddenly ok to be a bastard again.

Other men – those who quite enjoyed being nice and found being a bastard, with all the attendant pouting and brooding, a bit of a strain – were bemused. The failure of the new man forced them to ask that question all over again. What do women want? Is it really care and consideration they find boring? Is it really a case of 'treat 'em mean, keep 'em keen'?

This is where the second big confusion comes in. Many people definitely do associate bastards with excitement – particularly in their sexual fantasies. This is only a problem if we can't separate the fantasy of being the girl on the back of Marlon Brando's motorbike in *The Wild Ones* from the rather less glamorous reality of being entangled with a bastard on a day-to-day basis.

For the reality of going out with a bastard – and it has been some time since I could be bothered – can be summed up in one word: boring. Boring because it involves such an enormous amount of waiting and hanging around: waiting for them to call/leave their wife/the bottle/the party/the office. They are demanding, time-consuming and selfish. Bastards aren't companions, they are career options.

The trouble with bastards isn't that they are all the same, it's that they all have the same effect on their women. If a woman doesn't feel feeble and masochistic to start with, she will do before it's all over. Even the most independent, exciting woman can be reduced to a pathetic, passive, worried wreck, worn to distraction by the constant break-ups and make-ups, unreturned phone calls and being stood up at the cinema.

So what's their appeal? Partly it's the imagined challenge. I shudder whenever I encounter the reforming zeal that animates some of my friends when they are confronted with a particularly unrepentant specimen. This desire to be a cross between Florence Nightingale and Attila the Nun is a hangover from those days when the woman's only role was being the power behind the throne. Who needs the crusades, their eyes say, when I have this. So he's an alcoholic/womaniser/thug – I can rebuild him!

The other explanation for the bastard's appeal lies somewhere else entirely. Not in the object of desire but in women themselves. Interesting women aren't usually attracted to bastards. But for some a sense of vicarious drama is sometimes the best they can do. Bad men are like joining a Dangerous Sports club – it's the way some people get their kicks. Unfortunately, along with the kicks, most women also want a relationship. Which these men just can't deliver.

Don't get me wrong, I'm not knocking bastards – every woman should have one. They are ideal for those of us who sometimes, for whatever reasons, don't have the emotional energy or inclination for anything more adult because they offer virtually no possibility of a proper relationship. Bastards teach us everything that we don't want in a man. And they show us just how wonderful a nice man can be.

Nice men are confident enough to be tender and strong enough to be supportive. For them, being nice isn't a tactic, it's a way of life. The nice man understands the difference between being helpful and being patronising. He has the good manners to call when he says he is going to call. I love the fact that he'll let me be an adult sometimes instead of being a mother or social worker or saint.

Nice men don't labour under the delusion that every woman wants to 'tie him down'. Except in bed. Unlike bastards, they realise that playing power games in bed can be sexy, while pulling power stunts in the world outside is to be carefully avoided. What's more, a nice man has the confidence to stop being a stud long enough for you to give him pleasure for a change. Bastards tend to be so determined to impress, that at the end of the performance, you're never sure whether to come or to applaud.

The nice man will continue to exist long after this year's version of the new man has fallen by the wayside. He will always be the man I prefer between the sheets, if not necessarily on the screen. It's the difference between James Stewart and Jimmy Dean. Nice men try harder in real life. And that is very, very sexy.●

Something nice in the pigsty?

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The Battle For The FAMILY

The traditional family is in headlong decline. The 80s were a watershed. **Malcolm Wicks** gives chapter and verse and discusses the political implications

The family is crowding its way on to ministerial – and prime ministerial – agendas, the focus of several key policy questions. The scene may well be set for the family to feature large in the run-up to the general election.

Consider the range of issues. The Lord Chancellor is preparing proposals for divorce law reform, a new 'get tough' approach to maintenance payments has been announced; lone parents in general are a major cause of governmental angst; and John Patten's Ministerial Group on Women's Issues is grappling with a range of family/work questions, prompted by the demands of the labour market for more female workers in the 1990s. And that hardy political perennial, the future of child benefit, is again under discussion in the current public expenditure round, its life expectancy uncertain.

The importance of the family question however goes beyond current political debate and needs to be understood in terms of longer-term, and more fundamental, trends.

There is much concern, but also confusion and uncertainty, as to how government should react to the onset of nuclear family fission. This is particularly acute for the 'party of the family' which in office has, more than any other post-war administration, upheld the values of the traditional family, only to see all the key social indicators moving away from the cherished model. This is hardly the politicians' fault (and the wiser among them realise that there is little that governments can do). The trends are probably not for turning. Certainly they are not unique to Britain, occurring as they are in most Western developed societies. What are the key changes?

The cornerstone of the traditional family is marriage. And there have been unprecedented changes in the last 20 years. The trends do not add up to any simplistic 'end of marriage' scenario, but cohabitation and divorce have fundamentally changed the nature of family life. Those who marry – the majority – are marrying later. (The average age at marriage, for both men and women, has increased by approximately two years since the early 1970s, to just over 23 for women and just over 25 for men). One consequence of this and related trends has been a significant increase in the proportions of single men and women. For example, among women aged 25-29 years almost a third, 31%, remained unmarried in 1987 – up from just 13% in 1971.

As marriage rates declined in the 1970s and 1980s, cohabitation increased in popularity, although the latter is not the sole explanation of the former: more people today live alone, with friends, or stay on with parents.

Cohabitation before marriage is now virtually typical. This was true for 48% of women marrying in 1987 against just 7% in the early 1970s. By the end of this decade such cohabitation will become the norm.

More significant still is the increasing number and proportion of children born outside of marriage to cohabiting parents. The proportion of all children born outside wedlock has more than doubled in the 1980s, from 12% in 1980 to 27% by 1989. More and more of these children are being registered at birth by both parents and about half of the group live with cohabiting parents.

The trend is European-wide. While Britain is ahead of much of Europe, the interesting comparison is with Scandinavia. In Sweden, most notably, 50% of births are outside of marriage. Britain is now moving in that direction, but will it move far closer to the Scandinavian position by the end of the century, or will trends turn out to be different in Britain?

'There is much concern, but also confusion and uncertainty, as to how government should react to the onset of nuclear family fission'

Fewer children then are born to married parents, though the vast majority still are. The risk of children having parents who divorce, however, has increased substantially since the early 1970s. Britain now has one of the highest divorce rates in Western Europe. And the latest estimate is that 37% of new marriages – almost four out of 10 – will end in divorce.

All of this means that high proportions of children spend part of their early lives in families that are very different from the conventional model. More children are born outside marriage and this, together with high rates of marital breakdown, has led to large increases in the number of one-parent families. Today 16% of all dependent children live with one parent – in nine out of 10 cases, their mother. This was true for just 8% in 1971. Among European Commission countries, the United Kingdom has one of the highest proportions of lone-parent families, although no EC country is as high as the USA, where about 25% of families are lone-parent ones.

The so-called reconstituted, or step, family is also growing in importance. Substantial proportions of divorced people eventually remarry, particularly men. For example, among men who divorced during the period 1977-1980, almost three-quarters (72%) had remarried within five years. However, more and more step-families are based on cohabitation, not remarriage. Probably about one in 10 children in Britain today live in step-families, normally

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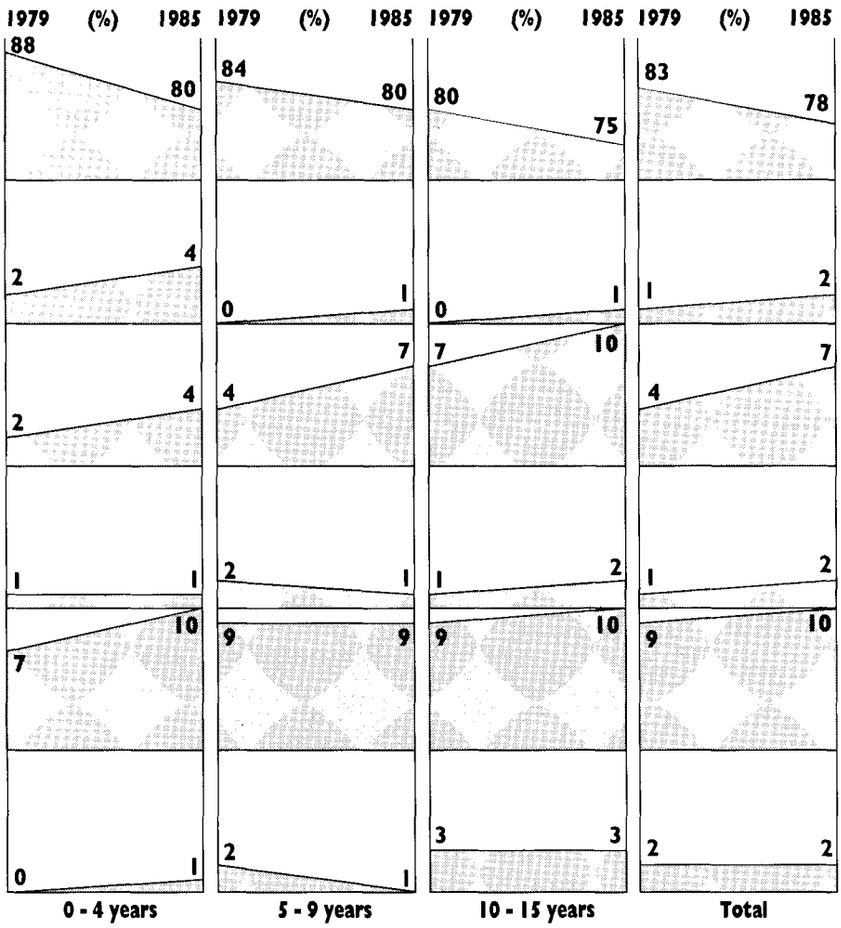
Children* by age and where currently living. Great Britain 1979 and 1985



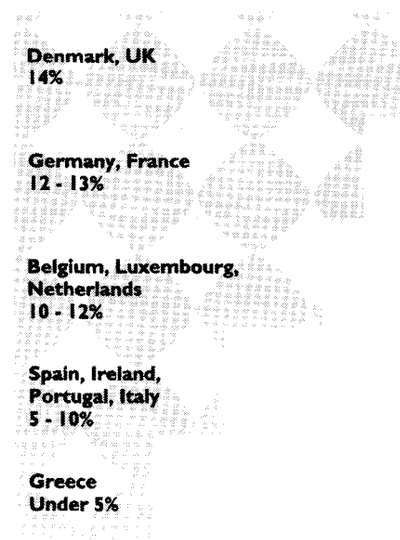
* Children aged 0 to 15 of women aged 18 to 49 (including married women aged 16 or 17)
Source: Family Change and Future Policy

Births outside marriage (%) Selected countries of Western Europe 1970 to 1986

	1970	1975	1980	1986
Sweden	18	32	40	50
Denmark	11	22	33	44
France	6	8	11	22
England & Wales	8	9	12	21
Norway	7	10	15	*21
West Germany	6	6	7	10
Nether-lands	2	2	4	9
Ireland	3	4	5	9

Source: Family Change and Future Policy * 1984

Lone parent families as a proportion of all families with children



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with their own mother and a step-father.

This is not the end of the family. Traditional features will remain into the foreseeable future: some seven or eight out of 10 will still get married, for example. But the forces of change are powerful. The 1980s were a watershed in which some familiar traditional features of family life were challenged. The process will continue this decade. The proportion of children experiencing the conventional family life-cycle – parents married at the time they were born and remaining married until they are grown up – could fall as low as 50% by the early years of the 21st century.

The powerful demographic and social trends that challenge notions of traditional family life are matched by significant employment changes. The modern two-parent family is increasingly a dual-worker family. Today some 60% of married women are active in the labour market, against just 10% in 1931. Each successive group of new mothers returns to the labour market more quickly than the one before. High proportions of very young children have parents who are both in employment. Thirty per cent of mothers with children under three are working, 19% part-time, 11% full-time. For a number of reasons, not least the needs of the labour market, these trends can only continue into the late 1990s and beyond.

How have recent changes, not least the rise of female employment and aspirations towards gender equality, affected the domestic division of labour? It has been suggested that the division of labour within the family may have become more equitable over time. But evidence from the British Social Attitudes Survey suggests that women perform the majority of domestic tasks within the household and that this position had not altered significantly between 1983 and 1987.

The extent to which household duties are unequally divided between the sexes is largely affected by a woman's employment status. Traditional female tasks such as cooking, cleaning and child care are more likely to be shared by both partners if a woman works full-time. Yet, even in these more egalitarian households, the woman is primarily responsible for performing these tasks; over 80% of the washing and ironing is done by women, for example. Women in part-time employment are less fortunate in this respect. For them, domestic duties are similar to those of women who are not employed: they have to combine the major share of household duties with paid work.

All that 'new man' mania of the 1980s was far more a mass media than a mass male phenomenon. The modern family is a two-worker one in the labour market, but not at home.

Faced with these crucial demographic, social and economic developments affecting British families, what are the implications for policy and government? They involve, by definition, important value questions and, indeed, Margaret Thatcher's own thoughts on the traditional family have been part and parcel of her concern to re-establish Victorian values. But faced with rapidly shifting ground, what are the practical possibilities?

A major arena is the reaction to family diversity itself. Can this government roll back recent social history – do anything to re-establish marriage, to decrease the number of single mothers and re-assert the pre-eminence of the two-parent family? In practice, the reaction of government is uncertain, as illustrated by the dilemmas of divorce law reform. On one hand is the logic, epitomised in the recent report from the Law Commission, that the fault grounds for divorce should be removed. But would this not represent easier divorce, say the traditionalists, and how can this safeguard the family? Lord Mackay, the Lord Chancellor, will seek to tackle the dilemma by establishing conciliation as part of his reform package.

Financial consequences of divorce represent another crucial policy arena. The government's concern to toughen up on maintenance payments – 'no father should be able to renege on his responsibilities', as the prime minister recently put it – will put in place some social philosophy and may reduce public expenditure, but it will not in itself tackle one-parent family poverty. Many would argue that it is a combination of employment opportunities, training and child care that may enable lone mothers to climb the ladder away from the pit of poverty. But is the encouragement of lone mothers with young children into the labour market the correct response from the party of the traditional family?

It is perhaps the new emerging interface between work and family life that raises some of the most important questions. The modern British family is, and will increasingly be, one headed up by two workers rather than one. Female economic activity rates have increased and will continue to do so. Today's girls and young women have aspirations in terms of work and future employment patterns which threaten traditional social policy assumptions about a 'woman's place' and her 'natural role' in relation to home and care. (As we approach a new century the question, 'Why do women want to work?' will be as meaningful as putting the same query to men.)

In the face of these trends, politicians have spoken with uncertainty. For example, at the start of the 1980s the governmental white paper, *Growing Older*[1], stated clearly that: 'Care in the community must increasingly mean care by the community'. Yet towards the end of the 1980s, the then secretary of state for employment Norman Fowler asserted that the 1990s would be 'the decade of the working woman'. This is bilingualism: a different language depending on whether the focus is social policy or economic productivity. One minute the woman is paraded as the crucial thread in the social fabric, the defender of hearth and home; the next she is the answer to productivity problems, 'new woman', whose place is firmly in the labour market. The change of tune was brought about by a change of demography – the shortage of youth – an economic upturn and an awareness of changing employment gaps.

Some of the most obvious implications, in terms of specific policy, involve child care. As comparative work in Europe shows, provision in Britain, particularly for very young children, is slight and compares poorly with some of our competitors. Recently there has been growing recognition of this, not surprisingly given one projection that eight out of 10 new jobs, over the next 10 years, will have to be filled by women. There has been growing interest, but still little actual practice, in workplace facilities.

What are the opportunities here, but what too are the dangers? How does one place the welfare of the child at the centre of the child care debate, and not the interests of the employer or personnel manager? How do poor mothers – those without economic power – get access to high-quality child care?

But while the immediate issues here are important – Britain desperately needs more child care, of the right quality, in a variety of forms and at the right price – there is a danger that a paucity of provision might be matched by a poverty of imagination when addressing the work/family question.

What, more generally, is the impact of the arrival of the dual-worker family on the welfare of the child? We know relatively little about this question, despite the keen assumptions and assertions of traditionalists and modernists. The Martian, observing our society over time, may wonder why it is that, despite rising economic affluence, the modern family unit requires two breadwinners rather than the one that was often the case in the past.

Those closer to the ground than the extra-terrestrial observer can point to a range of reasons – the changing role of women, rising aspirations and expectations and such mundane things as mortgages to pay. But the Martian may have a point. The debate about families and child rearing is so caught up with controversial discussions about gender that we have not yet been able to enter into a rational – and honest – debate about the role of *parents* in relation to their child-rearing and the partnerships that are required with those who can provide child care alternatives.

This debate will have implications for fathers, just as much as mothers. Does it really make sense that both parents should be fully active in the labour market when they are also responsible for the care of very young children? Is it not possible that more fathers might take time off – a year or so – around the

'Is the encouragement of lone mothers with young children into the labour market the correct response from the party of the traditional family?

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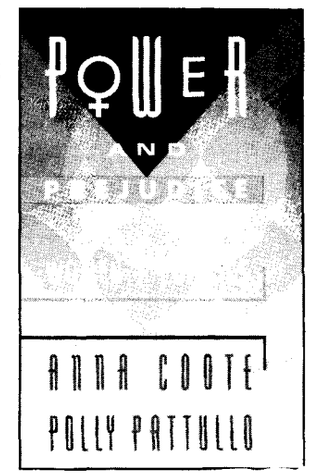

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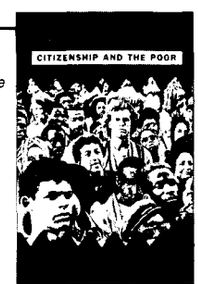

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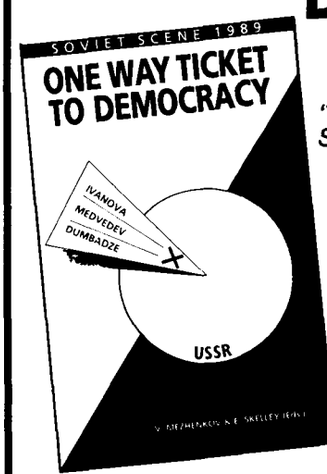

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time that their child is born? May not more fathers, and mothers, be enabled to work part-time – or certainly more flexibly – during the early years of their children's lives?

If we cannot grapple with questions such as these, we may start to see the disadvantages of the dual-worker family, as busy parents strive in their late 20s, 30s and early 40s to combine too many roles: adequate spouse, responsible parent, career-builder, breadwinner and mortgage-payer. When average life expectancy is in the order of 80 years (and when most remain active into their sixth decade and beyond) is it sensible to cram so much into such a relatively small proportion of the lifespan? What is the role of social and employment policy in trying to make for a more sensible arrangement?

A further area of active family debate is financial support. The three-year freeze of child benefit levels undermines substantially the government's family credentials. And while ministers point to the family credit scheme as an effective benefit for the poorest families, the critics are not so sure. We now hear about 'targeting' rather than means-testing. Targeting is to means-testing what designer jeans are to denim – the same product, repackaged and sold as new. With only a 50% take-up rate the strategy is undermined: a strike rate which might be welcomed in a Scottish forward line but which can hardly be graced by the term 'targeting'.

Recently the government's critics, including the poverty lobby, have welcomed on board an unlikely ally, Lord Joseph. In a paper for the Centre for Policy Studies (*Rewards Of Parenthood?*) the prime minister's close ally analyses the record and concludes bluntly: 'The plain fact is that families with dependent children have gained less from our policies than the childless.' His critique exposes the government to a crucial electoral question. Is the party that supports the family one that should support the family?

The range of family policy questions confronting this government – and indeed any government in the future – is formidable. On a number of fronts the Conservatives look vulnerable, not least in their attitude to women – wife, mother, carer, worker? Is the Conservative Party the party of the traditional family or one which will champion the emerging two-worker family and its needs in the 1990s? Which is the true view, the voice from some ministers that encourages employers to provide child care, or Margaret Thatcher's worries about a 'creche generation'?

Many Conservatives seek a return to the golden days – which may never have existed – of the traditional family. But, Canute-like, these traditionalists stand up to their waists as the social tides of family change advance – some shout 'forward', while others cry 'back'. Tougher-minded Conservatives, whose brand of economic liberalism has always stressed the individual, actively encourage women into the economy but are often ill at ease about the social obligations falling on government that this entails. These are difficult days indeed for the party that is increasingly confused about the family.

'The Right may be in some disarray about family policy, but nevertheless that is where the debate – and action – is taking place'

Yet, despite these uncertainties in their ranks, the government might just catch the crest of a new wave of moral concern. The Left could yet become vulnerable to a Tory government intent on capturing the high moral ground. Moreover the Left's vision of the family is hard to see. Much of the analysis from the Left has been critique – essentially of the family as a patriarchal institution. A positive strategy has not been developed. The Left has not yet placed its policies on poverty, equal opportunities, employment and children in the context of the emerging family and work structure of the 1990s.

Time is running out: the battle for the family is underway. The Right may be in some disarray about family policy, but nevertheless that is where the debate – and action – is taking place. Is there room in British politics for more than one party of the family, just as there certainly is for more than one type of family itself?●

1 DHSS (1981) *Growing Older*, Cmnd 8173 HMSO. For a fuller account of the changes in the family see *Family Change And Future Policy* by Kathleen Kiernan and Malcolm Wicks. This can be obtained from the Family Policy Studies Centre, 231 Baker Street, London NW1 6XE, price £7.50.

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Lenin's Crystal Ball

Have you ever thought of the SWP and the RCP as New Age? **Peter Davies** explains how the marxist cults are part of 90s' escapism

The millennium is fast approaching, and with it has dawned all the sub-hippy weirdness of the 'New Age'. A significant upsurge in mysticism, a renewed interest in all things spiritual and the re-emergence (or invention) of half-forgotten occult forms and flared trousers are noteworthy cultural phenomena of the new times; even Uri Geller's made a big comeback. The new times, evidently, are credulous and badly dressed times.

Perhaps, then, it is appropriate that as marxism struggles to cope with the complex and disturbing political and social changes of new times, as it loses much of its intellectual credibility, and as it increasingly marginalises itself, it too is adopting the form of a particularly esoteric religious cult. Although it has yet to bend many spoons or telepathically repair broken watches, it can at least perform 'dialectical magick' for its adherents: it makes time stand still, and holds the troubling uncertainties of new times at bay. After all, it is one of the functions of religion to provide comforting faith – that is, a system of certainties which prevents thinking – for those who otherwise might not be able to cope with their lives.

In the midst of a discussion of the 'syncretic' inter-relatedness of all world religions in Umberto Eco's recent novel *Foucault's Pendulum*, one of the characters refers to 'historical materialism'. The enigmatic expert on occult religions responds sharply: ' "Historical materialism?" Aglie smiled. "Oh yes, I believe I've heard of it. An apocalyptic cult that came out of the Trier region. Am I right?" '

Of course, Aglie is right. There can be little doubt that marxism – especially in its various leninist incarnations – increasingly shares many of the more conservative characteristics of the religions it so despises. That this notion has become a cliché only confirms its (more than metaphorical) appropriateness.

Marxism has become the 'opium of the marxists', with all the trappings: scriptures and dogma, saints and scholastics, institutional schisms, fundamentalist sects, fanatical devotees, visions of future paradise for the 'elect' vanguard and prophets with great beards.

Thomas H Green, in *Comparative Revolutionary Movements*, writes that 'religion serves as a surrogate... to political involvement, and yesterday's revolutionary may be easily transformed into today's "Jesus-freak".' The aggressive 'born-again' trots in the SWP, or those particularly *weird* RCP moonies one occasionally encounters peddling their gospel (even in the rain, for chrissake!) are living reminders that at least 'Jesus-freaks' had something going for them: humility and penitence. (But they also had the obligatory sandals, which, it must be said, is one up for the fairly nicely-shod trots.)

Historical materialism, the crystal ball hot-line to the future, is indeed a surrogate for political involvement. It implies that there is no need to seriously campaign for 'mundane' political changes now, but only the solemn Duty to prepare for Revolution by building the Party. After the Revolution, of course, all problems will be solved at a stroke; it being the Solution to the Riddle of History. This is interestingly analogous to the position of Jehovah's Witnesses, where needs of the present life, including vital medical care for their children, are sacrificed in favour of preparation for impending Armageddon.

Leninism denies pluralism by asserting a monotheism of the Party. It is closed to any kind of radical or non-conformist critique and defensive of its monopoly of doctrinal purity. The iconic texts of Marx and his Great Prophets are regarded by believers with the reverent awe which would be expected for Truths operating at a numinous level somewhere between the Koran and the works of Nostradamus.

The Leninist Inquisition in the Sacred Journals (*Socialist Worker*, *New Left Review*) is fearsome to behold; the self-appointed cardinals denouncing those heretics – feminists, environmentalists, anyone with critical faculties – who dare to deny the right of the Vanguard to speak in their name. 'Yea verily, for there is but One True Party which knoweth and seeth all, and thou shalt worship no other democratic centralist organisation before that which accosts thee in the high street and rams a newspaper down thy unbelieving throat.' (*Lenin 4:13.*)

With the dawning of the Age of Aquarius, leninists can at last claim to be in the vanguard of something. But the mysticisms of the New Age – tarot cards and dialectics – are a living nightmare for atheists: can 'worldly' matters no longer be contemplated in a non-religious way? Is there any polite way to get leninists or Jehovah's Witnesses away from your front door on a Sunday afternoon when the *EastEnders* omnibus is about to start? And why have the new times begat the New Age – or vice versa?

Rosalind Coward, the thinking person's messiah, has argued that New Age mysticism is a result of a form of anomie: a feeling of desperate powerlessness arising from our knowledge that decision-making is something distant from our lives, over which we can exert very little influence. Recent events in Eastern Europe show that the power of the people over those who rule them can be considerable, even where there is terrifying state repression. But it still seems improbable that we might bring about democratic changes in our own country, where the dungeons and chains are mostly in our own minds.

Instead of attempting to change society, the religious enthusiast chooses to abandon it for an apparently more 'pure' and uncorrupted lifestyle. In the

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New Age, revelations replace revolutions, and a sense of powerlessness is overcome by the construction, in the mind, of new hierarchies. The members of the cults 'know' this, at least: that they – and not us – have found 'truth', and will one day be saved while the rest of us are consigned to the purgatory we deserve. Hence the importance of their doctrinal purity, and attitude of arrogant superiority. And hence, in these uncertain new times, the search for past certainties, manifested in the mushrooming of witches' covens and SWP/RCP branches.

But let us try to look at it in another, more positive way. All these New Age religious cults, like the Acid House scene, might be viewed as ambiguous expressions of civil society, a form of alternative 'people power', and our attitude towards them need not be wholly dismissive. Together they constitute a decentred dissident movement, and this is as true – probably more true, actually – of the reinvention of celtic paganism as it is of the recent growth of the SWP.

By abandoning 'mainstream' politics and society the cults are exerting a kind of 'refusenik' pressure for change: they are, after all, peripheral elements in an ongoing centrifugal process and might be regarded as 'authentic' counter-hegemonic cultures. They live in the old times, but they are old times which, like flared trousers, have to be reinvented. They are in many ways a rebellious pastiche, a living theme park. The New Age cults are, in spite of themselves, part of the diversification and fragmentation of new times.

In a world of increasing uncertainty, theirs is an understandable quest for the Holy Grail of Truth. Yet the religious certainties they hold on to are opposed in some important ways to those which shape the thinking of dominant social groups. This cannot but be unsettling for the existing hierarchy of 'truth'. The 'certainties' of these tiny groups, each cult's fundamentalism clashing with every other, are not going to produce a new 'common sense', but they can do something on the margins to shake up the still fairly rigid British mindset that needs to be changed if we are to bring about a radical-democratic 'revolution' (pardon me).

While they remain small, marginal and fragmented – and let's face it, that's how they will remain – we have few reasons to fear their ambitiously totalising and potentially dangerous world views. Theirs is at best an ambiguous anti-authoritarianism, their disdain for the present 'system' co-existing with a fundamentalist denial of difference and rigid hierarchical power-structures.

This is much more true of the 'post-stalinist stalinists' in the SWP and RCP than of the High Priestesses of Wicca, who are substantially more progressive and a good deal more mellow. But as long as we don't overdose on our laid-back postmodernity and actually join these groups, they shouldn't cause us too much harm. Liberal relativism has its limits, after all. Seriously, however, I do advise locking up the kids when the Militant Tendency 'comrades' fly past on their broomsticks on Halloween.

'Historical materialism, the crystal ball hot-line to the future, is indeed a surrogate to political involvement'

We may not like some of these New Age developments, or agree with what the zealots say, but that's part of the slippery and ambiguous, and frequently anachronistic, character of the new times. The fundamental changes we are living through are out of their control as much as they are out of ours: it's just that their religion won't let them admit it, which must be very frustrating. But their difference from us, and especially their clashing with the institutions of power, is at least partly deconstructive.

We should not place ourselves at the top of a new hierarchy of truth, let alone try to establish a new monopoly. We have to learn not to be affronted by difference: even the trots have to be tolerated, if not loved. It would be an impoverished world – although admittedly a far more ideologically correct one – if everyone started thinking like post-modern intellectuals. (Admittedly, as none of us understand a word they've ever written, this is unlikely to happen.)

Then let us recite together, 'Yea verily, for *Marxism Today* is a wondrous fashionable journal; its editor is kind and wise, and thou shalt worship none other before him. Amen.'●

"Rubbish. Do you think a couple of trade laws are going to wipe away hundreds of years of resentment? I mean, look at the way the French and Germans have leapt on BSE to sell more of their own beef."

GET INVOLVED WITH
THE SUNDAY CORRESPONDENT

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Forever England

The new football season sees English clubs back in Europe. **Rogan Taylor** reflects on the World Cup, the fans and the future of the game

When I was travelling the world, over 20 years ago, I rarely admitted to being English. Throughout a decade of wilful wandering in Europe and the Far East I was asked countless times, 'Where are you from?' I always answered, instinctively, 'Liverpool'. In those days people would smile and mime the Beatles' latest hit. Today, most think of football and, synonymously, of hooliganism.

Thousands of young people from all over Europe travelled the road from west to east in the 60s. At certain nodal points – Kabul, Delhi, Katmandu, Bangkok – they clustered together, creating instant hippy ghettos based around one or two cheap hotels. You could wander through the rooms and watch them smoking dope: recounting travellers' tales and stoned reveries. The English always sat with the other English. You could have been in a flat in Hampstead with the central heating turned up and a few mosquitoes thrown in.

Watching the English fans gather in Cagliari for the first phase of the World Cup recalled the ghetto atmosphere of those Indian hotels. The dope-smoking was missing, of course. The sniffer dogs at Cagliari airport had seen to that. And the presence of thousands of armed police was specific to the occasion. But the beleaguered sense among the English of being aliens, alone together abroad, was a common feature. Like the hippies in India, the English fans predictably grouped around certain bars and cheap *pensiones*, their conversation inwardly directed, rumours abounding, contacts restricted to compatriots – apart from buying food, drink or a newspaper.

Many English fans never seemed to make it further into town than the square outside the bus and railway stations. Others who arrived by ferry only made it 50 yards or so from the docks, across the Via Roma to the first café bars. There they stopped, drinking weak beer at the most expensive tables in town, while inside, cheap local wines and powerful grappa lay un-asked for by the visitors. It takes a certain kind of bottle to ask for a bottle of something strange and previously untasted. Most English fans were well short of such reckless courage, though a few were full of another kind when facing the most feared riot squads in Europe.

I met a couple of lads who had been sleeping out in the railway station. They were being treated to a decent meal by a good-hearted journalist who presumed they were broke. It turned out that they *did* have sufficient money – it was the prospect of actually wandering out into a foreign town and spending it that stymied them. The thought of making potentially embarrassing inquiries, without any of the local language at their tongue-tips, was just too much. They had the finance, but not the

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All Sport

cultural capital to invest in any experiences beyond their arrival point.

With another group of fans, after watching a televised game, I suggested that we should all get something to eat at a cheap *trattoria* 20 yards away. They laughed at this impudence and insisted that they could not afford to eat anywhere like that. They left for a burger bar (at 5,000 lire a throw), ignoring the large bowls of minestrone and unlimited plates of crusty bread available at a mere 3,500 lire.

In this respect, the English fans were very like the English anywhere abroad. The prospect of embarrassment in a foreign land seems a terrifying one for this island race. And if you add the traditional British suspicion of foreigners and general belligerence towards them that characterised the empire-builders of the last two centuries, it makes for an awkward combination. The 'lads' who follow England (for women are few and far between) still embody this volatile mixture of nervousness and general xenophobia.

Until recently, it has been hard to identify any significant, alternative fan-culture which could break the traditional mould. The ordinary, well-meaning fans have clearly found even the worst elements in their midst – the brutal, nazi-style 'patriots' – *less* foreign (and therefore more tolerable) than the real foreigners that surround them. The alienating experience of being an English supporter in Europe – arriving after months of media hype to be met by ranks of armed police – still concentrates the tolerant and the racist fans together. What is worse, it reinforces the xenophobic attitudes of the latter, apparently proving their suspicion that all foreigners hate the English. The kind of indiscriminately violent policing practised in Sardinia during the World Cup only serves to spread such feelings among ordinary, non-racist fans.

Yet there are signs of positive changes. In Cagliari, the out-and-out meat-heads still wore insulting t-shirts and were ever ready with nazi salutes for any passing camera lens. But they were much older (by about 10 years) than the bulk of fans supporting England. They seemed old-fashioned too, like leftover dinosaurs stumbling around after their time.

Alongside them, a new wave of post-fanzine football fans is emerging. They combine a genuine enthusiasm for the game with a raised critical awareness of its past mismanagement and recognise the new role they might play in the future. They are also – and essentially – *wittier* than the old, beer-belly brigade.

It may be that fashions are changing for the better – and fashion is the iron law which carries greater force than all the armed *carabinieri* put together. The new-wave fans are being actively supported and powerfully represented by the Football Supporters' Association (FSA), who ran a fans' advice centre to great effect throughout the World Cup. The FSA is as yet a comparatively small, shoestring body, but it did succeed in raising the £12,000 required to run the centre (including donations from the Football Trust and the Football Association). Even as it stands, the organisation may be the most successful campaigning outfit for football fans in Europe to date.

Now that English clubs (bar Liverpool) are returning to European competitions, the FSA and the encouragement of the new-wave fans is increasingly important. Yet to hear sports minister Colin Moynihan, the future is still exclusively about crowd control and law and order. Important though these topics are, the minister makes no reference at all to the positive role fans are beginning to play. Despite invitations, he failed even to visit the FSA's 'football embassy' in Cagliari – though just about every other football interest did.

The active involvement of fans that the FSA represents could be the light at the end of a long, dark tunnel for English football. To grow, it needs all the help it can get – including from government and football's administrators. There is a new agenda for the game, much wider than before. The sooner it is adopted, the sooner the real work can begin.●

Cup Winners

In our competition (*MT* June) we asked you to select a team of 11 specialists and experts from any field. The incentive of a bottle of champagne for the winner attracted some inspired entries. Eastern European politics was a recurring theme: Don Redding of London gave us Egon Krenz in goal (thought to be a safe pair of hands) and Ceausescu (Sweeper) sent off. Erich Honecker cropped up on the Also-rans XI (inevitably, perhaps, not the winning entry) sent by Keith Johnstone of Wellington, New Zealand.

Carol Place of Harrogate put together a fine feminist team, though dirty play might be expected from Julie Burchill on the wing. A bold choice of captain in Norman Mailer. Phil Lee of Leicester gave us the Socialist Jargon XI featuring 'RCP Member' playing wild on the left.

The Heroic Failures team sent in by Eleonor Smith and Michael Hellier of Hertford brought together Neil Kinnock and Ken Livingstone, possibly the first time they have ever played on the same team. They didn't reappear on Ben Ball's team, the curious Whatever Happened To...? XI, which left us to ponder the whereabouts of Hughie Green and Mary Hopkin.

The winning team was faxed from the subs desk at *The Morning Star*:

British Justice XI
Guildford Four
Maguire Seven (Subs: Birmingham Six)

A bottle of champagne is on its way from *Marxism Today* to *The Morning Star*.●

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FICTION

A short story by **Michèle Roberts**

Child Of Frank

Hello, my dear children. Are you lying comfortably? Then I'll begin.

My name is Frankie, and I'm here to tell you your bedtime story tonight. You don't know me, of course, since we've never met before (what a nice home you have, by the way, I just love these pink walls), so let me introduce myself quickly and then I can get on with what I'm here for. I'm new to babysitting, this is the first time I've done it. It must be bewildering for you to have a total stranger arrive in the nursery and see you off to sleep, so I'm going to do whatever I can to reassure you. I want you to have pleasant and positive dreams. Don't be scared, children. I'm a friend. I know how you might feel, you see, because of my own history. Where was I? Oh yes. Introductions.

My name is Frankie. Oh no, we've done that bit, haven't we? Sorry. Let's see. Well, I'm called Frankie after my father. Oh yes, I have a father too. Just like you. Well, not exactly. Dr Frank, his clients and co-workers call him. He started off as a science-fiction writer in the 70s, and was doing quite well. But he wasn't making what you'd call a *really* good living. So he switched to business and worked his way up fast. He's got lots of stamina, and a terrific brain.

At the moment he works as a consultant to a firm specialising in educational and psychological resource technologies. He's got a particular interest in child development, he's really concerned about issues like early parent-child bonding, pre-natal child stress, the effects on young children of traumas like separation and loss, and he's been able to channel all these concerns into his job to good effect. Of course I'm immensely proud of him. And I'm equally grateful to him for letting me share in his life's work.

We all want to make a contribution, don't we? I'm sure you do. Mine is to help you with yours. It was my father's idea. He realised that sooner or later you'd start asking questions, about where you came from and so on. So he came up with this notion of bedtime stories.

You look so sweet lying there in your little glass beds. Are you tucked up comfortably? Then I'll begin. I want you to watch the moving colours, children. I want you to listen to my voice. Even if you don't understand all the words. I'm dimming the lights in here to this cosy pink glow, and in a moment I shall switch on the backing tape. Music goes well with storytelling. I think so, anyway. I hope you'll like the music. I want you to be happy. I want you to sleep well.

I thought I'd start with a story from long ago. My father had this one told to him, and his father before him, and his grandfather before him, and his great-grandfather before him. It hasn't dated. It's the best one I can think of to begin with.

Once upon a time, a very long time ago, there was a boyess called Mary, who lived in a town called Nazareth in a country called Palestine. Mary was quite ordinary, a typical boyess of that time and place. She was engaged to be married to a carpenter called Joseph. Carpentry means making things out of dead trees. I've never seen a tree, but my father has told me what they were like. A long time ago people used to worship them, can you imagine that? They thought gods lived in them. Don't ask me to explain *gods*, I haven't the language for it, and anyway it doesn't matter. I'll explain *God* to you in a minute, though, when we come to it.

Sorry. I'm getting all bogged down in technical detail. Sorry. I'm supposed to be telling you a nice simple story, I know. They said keep it short, but it's very difficult. I keep wanting to wander off sideways. I want you to understand, but I'm not very practised at storytelling. My father says that doesn't matter, but I think it might. There are so many things I myself don't understand, so how can I hope to explain them to you? My vocabulary isn't large. Some of the words I'm using I'm not clear

of the meaning of, like 'engaged to be married'. My father says I mustn't worry about it.

Sorry. The story. Well, there was Mary engaged to be married to Joseph the carpenter. Well, naturally they hoped to start a family as soon as possible. *Naturally* means: the way things are now. Well, in those days, people had what was called *sex* in order to make babies. Their bodies had to get very close together, apparently, sort of become part of each other for a while. It must have been very messy and smelly and hot and sweaty. Most unpleasant I should think. Thanks to men like my father I'll never have to do that, of course, and you won't either, for different reasons.

What the boy had to do was to put his penis into the boyess and ejaculate sperm. The seeds of the babies to come. The seeds implanted, or one of them did, it was a chancy business with a lot of

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Illustration: Mikey Georgeson

wastage, and they, or it, grew inside the boyess until it was ready to come out. The boy provided the seed and the boyess provided a nice warm safe place for it to grow in. The penis was important, you see, because the babies came from it, and so the people of that time cherished boys and felt that the penis was very important and must be treated with great reverence. We still do, I want you to understand that. All children need to know where they come from and you're no different in that respect from my father and his father and his grandfather before him. You come from a penis too, but without any of that horrid messiness.

Where was I? Oh yes. Well, Joseph and Mary worried a lot, because try as they might to do sex as often as possible in the right way, they couldn't have a baby. But luckily they had a very good doctor. He was called God. All the techniques of artificial insemination and implantation were of course in their *infancy* at that time (I can make jokes, you see, as well as tell stories) but nonetheless he was able to make Mary grow a baby, once he'd diagnosed the problem. He put one of his specially grown seeds into Mary and so she had a baby.

The child, once he was born, was called Son of God. Joseph felt rather left out of things, a bit inadequate, because in those days they didn't have the counselling programmes we do now, but Mary was able to take a lot of pride in what her child went on to do. Of course, and this is the point of the story, we don't have to use boyesses as child-carriers any more. We prefer glass to flesh. Test-tube to cot is our motto, to put it in words you can understand at your tender age. But I think the boyesses among you will understand, when you grow up (if you grow up – though I shouldn't say that, my red light's flashing as a reminder that I was told not to alarm you) that there's nothing to be ashamed of in having provided the inspiration for the design of our growing-chambers, even if the original has been superseded. And of course the boys among you can feel proud that with luck you'll be able to grow up to become like my father who's learned so much from God.

That's my signal to stop. I hope I got that right. Well, that's the end of the story.

Shall I tell you another, or are you asleep? It's so quiet in here. The monitors flicker soundlessly, your breathing is hushed, regular, just as it should be. Moonlight glimmers through the window-screens on to the long rows of glass containers, on to the metal feed-drips. People used to worship the moon, once, can you imagine? They thought it was a god, or at least they did until wise men like my father walked on it for the first time and were able to analyse what it was made of. People used to think the moon was a sort of boyess-god. In those days that was called a *mother*. Officially that's an obsolete term, but I've got it in my vocabulary just in case I need to explain more fully our progress away from those early outmoded forms of reproduction.

I didn't have a mother, of course. I didn't need one. My father made me all by himself. He did have some highly trained and competent boyesses helping him, part of his team. We wouldn't dream of discouraging those boyesses who are capable of it from developing careers in

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technology and science. It's a complete nonsense to suppose, as apparently they did in the bad old days, that only boys can be scientists.

But you're not listening, are you? You're sound asleep, and I'm not sure what to do now, whether I should try some sleep-suggestion stories on you, or whether I should just run some trial programmes. Next week, you know, they're going to let me do bereavement counselling at the health centre and then, if that goes well, family-visit videos for lonely old people in the pre-euthanasia ward next to here. Perhaps I should switch myself off. Sometimes I wish I wasn't programmed to make autonomous decisions. Sometimes I wish I didn't have to be responsible for what I say and do.

Lonely old people. I know what that means. I have to, or I couldn't be convincing. I can't *feel* lonely, of course, since I just switch off. My father doesn't have to touch me to switch me off. It's all in-built. I've been very well designed. I've even got an unconscious; they thought that would be interesting, to see whether that would help the people using the psychotherapy programme. It's potentially dangerous, of course. So my unconscious is a rudimentary one. I've been programmed only for the therapist mode, counter-transference followed by repression and switch-off. But they're confident I'll get a good response.

I've still got some tape. I've still got some time. It's funny, I feel like going on talking, and I wish you were still listening so that I could feel useful. Why do I say *feel*? Well, I know what it means. I think I do.

OK, Frankie (sorry, I'm talking to myself again, I do that too much), let's try some word association using the unconscious memory programme. You never know, it might come in useful for when they redesign this bedtime story. You could say I'm babbling in my sleep. In your sleep. It's what I'm designed to do.

Mother.

As I said just now, I don't have a mother. But my father had a wife. She left him a long time ago, before I came along, so I never knew her. I musn't call her mother: sometimes, on nights like this, when I run on too long, I end up having nightmares. Just like you do sometimes. We're working on that. We're working on me too. So I must be careful. I'll just whisper it. *Mother.* I'll wait a little, and see what comes up, what that word will link itself to.

Oh. This hurts. Hurt means a misconnection.

My mother is a scientist. She is called Dr Frank too, just like my father. She's got a research job at a university, working in the team of a top scientist, and my father's very proud of her and encourages her. She disagrees with my father's move from writing books into being a business consultant, and they quarrel fiercely. They quarrel again about my mother wanting to leave her job in order to do more research abroad. She's got a safe academic post and she abandons it. The marriage breaks up.

My mother is a scientist. She calls herself now just by her first name: Maria. My mother is part of an international team of geologists and others studying the earth's surface. A research project to do with ecology, to study the effects of deforestation. The lack of trees.

I find my mother in a scorching open landscape of bare brown hills. I run up and down them, looking for the mother I have not seen for so long. I find her sifting the earth with a fine comb. This project will take her a long time. She squats on the earth. She puts a handful of earth into her mouth, on to her tongue, she tastes it and swallows it. She puts her ear to the earth and listens.

My mother works alone, because she is a scientist who says she is a woman not a boyess.

My mother is a scientist. She looks at me and says: you are my *daughter*. You are a *gir*... .

Whoops! Time to go. Goodnight, children. Sleep well. This is Frankie wishing you all goodnight.●

Howard Brenton has been to Moscow

Howard's Way

For the past year, Tariq Ali and I have been writing a 'perestroika' play, entitled *Moscow Gold*, about the events in the Soviet Union from 1982 to the present. It is a huge undertaking, with 102 parts for 33 actors. It has called for some 'perestroiking' of how plays are made, to encompass such a great theme.

The only model we had was the work of the great Soviet theatrical genius Vsevelod Meyerhold. He attempted a theatre of great breadth, trenchant but nimble-footed, which was not documentary but 'living history', played out upon the stage at many levels of meaning with many techniques. *Moscow Gold* does not imitate the 'look' of his productions but we have tried to learn from his spirit.

We combine satire and history, tragedy and farce, analysis and song, dramatising the predicament of the citizens of the Soviet Union both 'high' and 'low', politburo members and people in the food queues, as their country is traumatised by the Gorbachev reforms and the multiple crises they have unleashed.

We have had some bizarre adventures with the play – for example, a famous Russian ballerina, with voice coaches and lawyers in tow, was, wildly inappropriately, determined to play a Kremlin cleaner. At times discussions with various theatre managements reached the hysterical pitch of Mikhail Bulgakov's great backstage satire, *Black Snow*. A West End commercial producer whom Ali and I approached refused to even read the play and described us as 'a menace to the British theatre'.

The agent of a 'star' actor, asked to read the part of Gorbachev, was spotted by one of our spies on the Metropolitan line shouting and hitting the seat next to him with the script. We take these as encouraging signs that we are on the right track. *Moscow Gold* will open in a production by the RSC, to their credit, on the main stage of the Barbican Theatre in September.

Soviet survivor

Tariq Ali has visited the Soviet Union a number of times. I had never been, so last summer, before we began writing, I went to Moscow and Kiev for two weeks alone. I set myself the rule that I would speak to no other Westerners. A wise decision.

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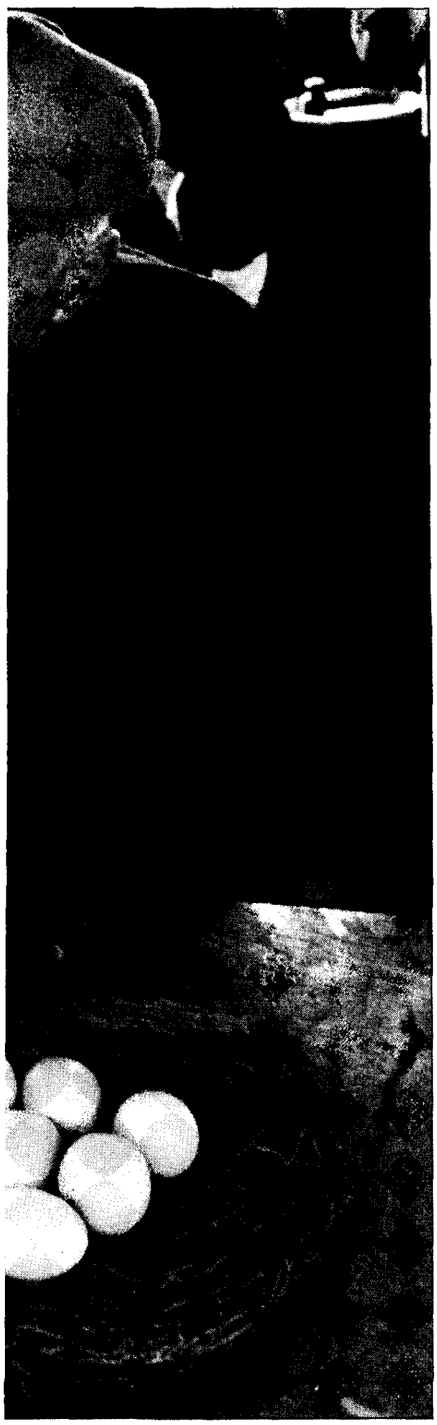


The Americans were a pain in the arse when you came in their orbit, finding Red Square 'so small', or loudly asking in a state restaurant whether the food before them was meat or fish; a spurious question since clearly nobody, not even the cooks, could answer it.

It took some days and many conversations until the force of the obvious truth about Soviet citizens hit me with anything like the realisation of what it meant. I was among Sunday crowds strolling along The Arbat, with its restored 19th-century facades. There was a heatwave. The sun blasted down through the pollution, the queues at the occasional Pepsi-Cola stands were long and patient. Poets took turns to recite from heart – some received rapturous applause, others none. And the obvious came to me – everyone in sight in the street was in some way a survivor, and the child of survivors.

In England it is a casual thing to ask a chance acquaintance, 'Are your mother and father still alive, what do they do?' To ask that in Moscow is a serious and sorrowful matter. The stories of tragedy and suffering pour out. This woman in her late 50s saw her parents murdered by German soldiers and with her younger sister walked the roads for a month before being taken in and brought up by a family of peasants. This man was in the camps for 10 years and says, 'I lost a lung,' then shrugs, 'one lung, one life left'.

And for anyone who came to maturity before 1985, who is 25 or older, there are the meaner, soul-destroying experiences of survival under Brezhnev, the 'stagnation era', of which I repeatedly heard the phrase, 'you couldn't breathe'. Everyone had to live in the halitosis of the terminally decaying bureaucracy – which everyone, but for a handful of relatively unimportant dissidents, serviced, half-awake in a kind of lethargic complicity. The Russian joke about the worthlessness of the rouble, 'I'll pretend to work, you pretend to pay me', sums up the economic disaster this complicity has caused. A man about my age, 47, said, with black Muscovite irony, 'At least under Stalin you had the choice of dying, screaming. Under Brezhnev even that was denied to you.'

In *Moscow Gold* we have tried to grasp the Byzantine, multi-dimensional 'unreal-reality' of the society in which Gorbachev and the reformers in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union exploded the twin programmes of glasnost and perestroika in the April of 1985.

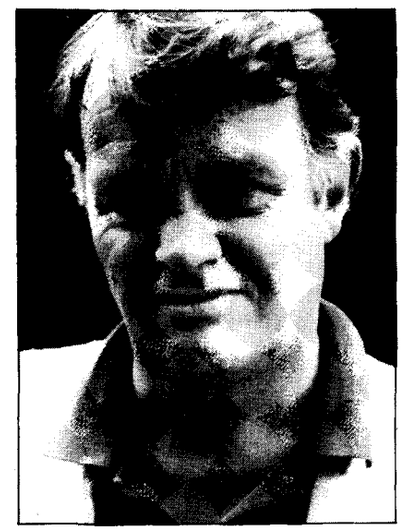
We are not dewy-eyed about the conditions in the Soviet Union as it lurches between disintegration and transformation. We give full voice to the present chaos and bitterness. It is appalling to witness the food crisis in Moscow's supermarkets and terrible to sense the humiliation and sorrow of a silent crowd in the shoe section of *Gum*, the state department store, staring at the ranks of unwearable shoes, buying nothing. 'Why is everyone here?' I asked. It turned out there was a rumour that there were some good sandals from Czechoslovakia on their way.

There were times in Moscow, and certainly in Kiev talking to a leader of the National Front, a mad child of the Brezhnev era on the rebound with his mind blasted by dangerous ideas, when it was hard to contain a rage against what has been done in the Soviet Union to the humanist aspirations of the founders of socialism.

But we do give notice that we are, perhaps unfashionably, optimistic. Thomas Pynchon, in his brilliant novel *Vineland*, writes hilariously of the need for 'tube detoxification', that is, drying-out from the effects of too much television. *Moscow Gold*'s authors have constantly needed detoxification from television news and punditry about the Soviet Union over the last year. For despite almost weekly alarms of 'ultimate showdowns' and 'final collapse' in the western media, the nation of survivors endures and persists upon its unique course of history.

The 1917 revolution was unique; the Stalinist night and its repression was unique; the petrified forest of the Brezhnev era, unique, and now there is the unprecedented attempt of a decayed authoritarian system to reform itself, to turn itself inside out from within.

Western socialists have for years felt the dead hand of the disaster of Stalin and Brezhnev upon their hopes. But now the end of the cold war can cut either way and the triumphalism of the Right may be short-lived. In 10 years' time, if the pessimists are right, the Soviet Union will be 'Brazilified', a country rich in resources but sunk in social misery. If the optimists, among whom Tariq Ali and I count ourselves, are right, in 10 years' time the Soviet Union will be a commonwealth of nations with a new, democratic socialism, regulated market and all.



Brenton: Optimistic

Moscow Gold is nothing if not ambitious. There is a lot of talk about the end of the possibility of a vibrant political drama on publicly owned (that is 'subsidised') stages in Britain, killed off by hostile Thatcherite placemen in the Arts Council and the blandishments of commercial sponsors, for whom Hamlet is not a play but a 'logo opportunity'. Well! If a living theatre, 'alive to what it's like to be alive now', is to be killed off on the British stage it is our intention, with plays like *Moscow Gold*, to make the funeral a very noisy and memorable party. And if the *Moscow Gold* team does its job well, the funeral may be so enjoyable it will not be we who end up in the grave.●

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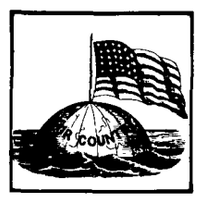

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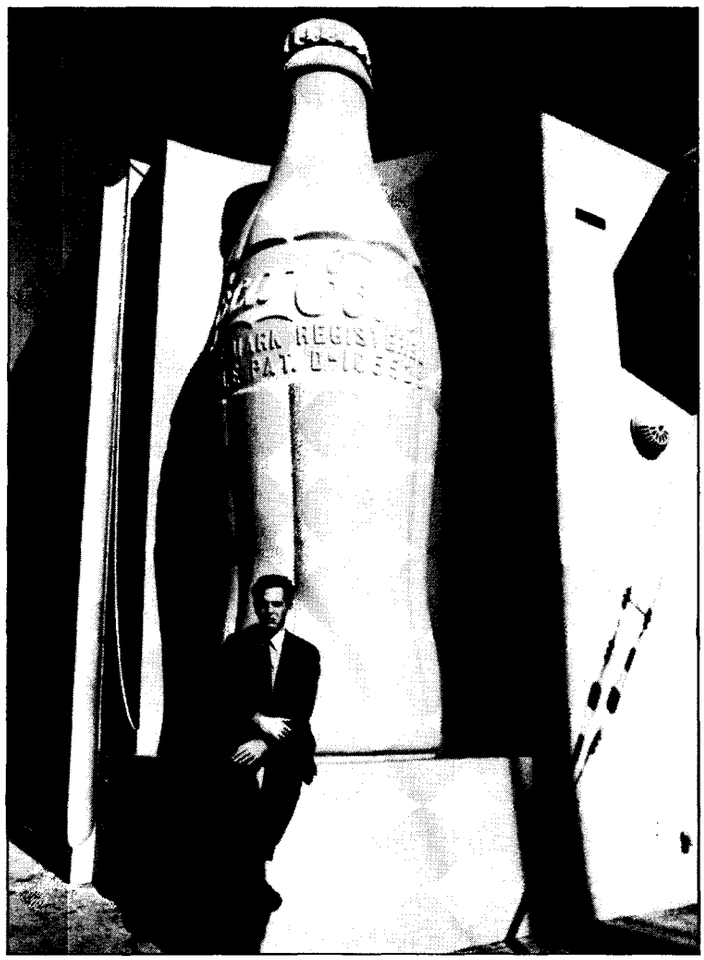
BOOKS

Geoff Mulgan views the sale of the century

The Price Is Right



Capitalism is one 'ism' that has rarely been invoked with pride. There are no Capitalist Parties. Arthur Seldon wishes there were, and has offered them a manifesto.

At first glance the timing is perfect. Capitalism faces no more (geopolitical) competitors, no more barriers to trade and profit, no more soul-searching and apology. For the *Wall Street Journal-Economist-FT* axis these are the good times. It's no surprise that they have welcomed a book which tells them that what they do is, if not perfect, then at least for the best of all possible worlds.

Arthur Seldon is an English eccentric. Personable, literate, intelligent and even, it seems, a regular reader of *MT*, but he has clung on to an idea with total conviction for 40 years. For other eccentrics it might have been Jesus, astral projection or road safety. For Arthur Seldon it has been the market. The market is a talisman he waves at any and every policy issue or conflict.

Over the last decades, he and the Institute of Economic Affairs have pumped out a succession of pamphlets applying market principles to everything from pensions (their desocialisation) to council houses (recommending their sale as far back as 1964). After the dark years of the 50s and 60s, when they felt surrounded by a concrete consensus of Butskellite statism, Seldon and his colleagues came in from the cold in the 1970s. With stagflation and the intellectual decay of Keynesianism, Sir Keith Joseph and later Margaret Thatcher found in the IEA an intellectual vanguard to regenerate the Right.

Seldon's new book **Capitalism** *(Basil Blackwell, £19.95)* is the testament of an evangelical career. It sets out again the new Right's arguments for the market as a superior mode of organisation. It roots out what it sees as the lingering statisms. It takes pleasure in the spectre of communism collapsing down the rubbish chute of history. It takes issue too, with the recent attempts of the British Left to come to terms with the market, everyone from Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques to David Marquand and Raymond Plant.

Seldon makes three central arguments. The first is a practical one, that market systems deliver the goods and that socialist ones do not.

The second argument is also a historical one, that market systems serve the interests of the common people, that they alone respond to those aspirations for self-improvement, for greater equality and for eliminating poverty that used to be called socialist.

The third argument is the crux of the book. It is the claim that economics is superior to democracy and that politics is a low form of life. In Seldon's phrase, the over-valuation of politics (which he associates as much with people like Shirley Williams as with the SWP), inevitably leads to government 'of the busy, by the bossy, for the bully'. Any real freedom depends on insulation from interference by governments and politicians.

When Seldon talks about capitalism he is refering not to a historical reality but rather to an ideal. Capitalism is 'the system that makes as little use of the political process... as necessary and as much use of the market as possible.'

This definition is sure to raise a few historical hackles. The history of capitalism and markets is clearly interwoven, but not synonymous. States all over the world have played central roles in accumulating capital. Whole schools of marxist theory have been devoted to showing the symbiosis of state and capital in collusion against the common people. Moreover, as historians like Braudel have shown, some markets are more equal than others.

Seldon avoids such niceties. There is scarcely any mention of the real agents of modern capitalism, of Nomura and General Electric, Siemens and Merrill Lynch. There is equally little on the ideologues of real capitalism, with their stress on human resources, on the quasi-socialist rhetoric of people like Rosabeth Moss Kantor and even Peter Drucker, or on the industrial policy claims of business *wunderkinds* like Michael Porter. Despite its breadth and eloquence, *Capitalism* has remarkably little to say about capitalism.

Seldon's analysis is easy to fault on many counts. His account of private property as the guarantor of care, and thus of environmental conservation, turns a reasonable observation into a ludicrous conclusion. Like his colleagues he is remarkably oblivious to the political experiences of the last 30 years: there is no appreciation of feminism, of racial politics, nor indeed of any alternatives to capitalism other than industrial socialism.

Yet Seldon scores many points. He properly questions the practical efficiency of communist states and their failure to better the lot of the common people. He enjoys taking potshots at the once familiar socialist habit of treating every downturn as a terminal crisis, and he criticises the economic illiteracy of so many left intellectuals, even those who claim adherence to a materialist analysis of society.

It is refreshing too to read a right-wing book that takes seriously the idea of cultural power. Seldon attacks the critics of the market on the grounds that their cultural capital is if anything more oppressive. Unfortunately he takes the thought no further. There is not even a hint of the wealth of observation that Bourdieu has brought to the study of the relationship between economic and cultural power.

To use an old-fashioned word, what the ideologues of the Right lack is a sense of dialectics. The end of the cold war does not seem likely

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to bring a simple victory of capitalism over socialism, of market over state. Rather, both look set to be pulled into the same ideological vortex. Both will be reformed in as yet unpredictable ways.

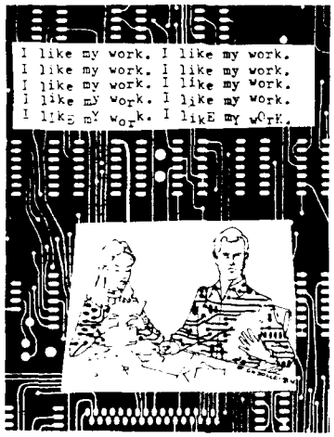
The capitalism which has brought the world to the edge of ecological disaster will not be seen as a sufficient solution. The selfishness on which it is predicated will not be seen as a sufficient ideal of human nature. The market mechanism on which it depends will be seen as no less flawed than other human institutions, and no less open to power and manipulation.

Having won the geopolitical battle, capitalism now faces a much more pernicious enemy. It faces an enemy within. It must now learn to live with its own corrosion of values, the costs of coping with its own environmental damage and the dangers thrown up by its financial systems. And as the mood shifts towards the kindlier, gentler 90s, the prophets of capitalism may come to regret the loss of the old menace.●

Matt Seaton on the new misinformation age

Mean Machines

Dedicated to 'all the subversive spirits languishing in lonely, useless jobs everywhere', **Bad Attitude, The Processed World Anthology**, edited by Chris Carlsson with Mark Leger (*Verso*, £11.95), is the 'other America' at its brightest and best. Combining a radical politics of the workplace with seriously wacky humour, this


I like my work. I like my work.
I like my work. I like my work.
I like my work. I like my work.
I like my work. I like my work.
I like my work. I like my work.

anthology represents nearly a decade of publishing for *Processed World*, a San Francisco magazine which has become a voice and forum for the office proletariat of the 'information age'. The nearest literary and graphic equivalent in the UK would probably have to be *Class War*, but this would be faint praise indeed for *PW*'s much more sophisticated sense of political mission.

Contemptuous of the traditional labour movement, in both its trade-union and orthodox Left guises, *Bad Attitude* engages the new constituency of peripheral office workers created by the post-Fordist restructuring of the US economy and society. Inciting temps to steal time, secretaries to spill coffee on their keyboards, clerical staff to shred crucial documents (or even their supervisors), *Bad Attitude* brings the ancient and venerable practice of sabotage right up to date. Even if the suggestions remain at the level of fantasy, *PW* has evidently mined a rich source of inspiration for discontented office drones, frustrated with the banality of their work.

The critiques of work and of consumption – 'selling your time to buy the time that other people sold' – are key components of the *PW* project. Rightly enough, *Bad Attitude* acknowledges a special debt to the work of the Situationist International, whose ideas and slogans were immortalised by the 'happenings' of 1968. The influence of such classic texts as *On The Poverty Of A Student Life*, Guy Debord's *Society Of The Spectacle* and Raoul Vaneigem's *Revolution Of Everyday Life* on the *PW* anthology is unmistakable: desire and fun are celebrated; false needs and the 'overdeveloped commodity economy' are berated. Even the graphic style (*Bad Attitude*

MEANWHILE, IN THE OFFICE OF A MAJOR METROPOLITAN CORPORATION, THE BOSS IS GOING CRAZY . . .
Why did you let me write this memo? The information's wrong, the spelling awful! Can't I do anything right? Make me an appointment at Frenchy's Massage Parlor! And Betty — YOU'RE FIRED!!
BAMM!

is heavily illustrated with cartoons, comic strips and montages) owes much to the guerilla tactics of détournement – the subversive aesthetic practice developed by the SI.

However, *Bad Attitude* is more than a nostalgia trip for a few West Coast philo-situationists. Its 'situationism' is translated into a thoroughly American vernacular, blended with some home-grown strains of political and syndicalist radicalism: the tradition of the IWW (aka the 'Wobblies'), with its emphasis on direct action, autonomous workers' organisation and solidarity, undergoes a curious and unlikely renaissance in the pages of *PW*.

Though deeply rooted in the counter-culture that blossomed in the early 1970s, the magazine was first published only as recently as 1981, somehow creating a bridgehead of radicalism in the hostile environment of Reaganite California, whose Silicon Valley owed so much of its prosperity to gung-ho defence budgets. The key to this success is two-fold. Firstly, *PW* engages with a deeply subordinated sector of workers with wit, imagination and humour, inviting them to respond in kind (all of which is foreign to the orthodox Left and trade-union movements); secondly – without dealing too much in cultural stereotypes – it could only happen in California!

Like all anthologies, the quality is uneven and the editorial logic fairly oblique. You sometimes have to be patient for the real gems, like the bizarre but inspired subscription advert for *PW* which tells you that the future of spiritual law enforcement is 'RoboPope' – 'part man, part machine, all pontiff'. The reference to the concept of auteur-director Paul Verhoeven (creator of *Robocop*) is entirely appropriate. Judging by that film, Paul Verhoeven must be a paid-up subscriber to *PW* – the swingeing satire of bureaucratic-corporate Amerika with its form of free-enterprise totalitarianism and the sense of humour are identical.

In his acknowledgments, Chris Carlsson thanks Verso 'for taking a chance on us'. I'd second that: this is a really original and daring piece of publishing. Twenty years ago it might have seemed more commonplace, but in 1990 it deserves to gain cult status. And remember, 'If you make a social revolution, do it for fun!'●

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MESSAGES

● **Mark Perryman** MT's Style Trial, always the first to call a meeting, could you speak up a bit on the phone please? I don't think your socks are loud enough. We'll miss your cycling (and recycling of ideas), your Tin Tin t-shirts, tangenital remarks and delicately poised gender balance. Love from all at MT. Taxi for the circulation manager!

To the man who HATES
Garamond Bold Italic
GOODBYE
in Helvetica
All our best wishes, Jan and Inti

● **"We're singing for Ludwin, Lud-er-win".**
Best of luck with your interview, Steve,
Express yourself, my man,
And there's none of us want you to leave
Now you're a football fan.

● **MP, now you're leaving MT why not join us?** Love from the Social Fascists: Neil K, Billy B and Rod L.

● **Healthy men!** Put solidarity and altruism into practice. Please be a sperm donor. No involvement required. Write with brief details. Box 63.

● **Danieletta Nana.** Ciao Malgesso. Bonjour Maribar Caves. Sorry about the fried fish. Hermano.

● **In Remembrance.** Laurie Tom Perryman, 7 June 1915 to 28 June 1990. He made me what I am in so many different ways, some he knew, the rest I am sure he will still come to know. Thank you, Mark.

MT EVENTS

● **Golders Green, Hendon, Finchley MT readers group.** Contact 081-455 1616.

● **Manchester:** A Marxism Today event on 'The Future of Europe' is being planned in Manchester. If you have ideas on this theme, or would like to become involved with organising this exciting venture please contact Pat Devine, 2 Hamilton Rd, Whitefield, Manchester. Tel: 061-766 4977.

● **Cardiff: Marxism Today Forum** User-friendly group, pluralist and open is eager to expand, and seeks new participants. If you have ideas we want them! Coming up: regular "reading group", and a short series of women-only events. Next meeting: Monday 13 August, Wyndham Street, Riverside (8pm). For further details, contact Peter Davies, 21 Clare Street, Riverside. (Tel 227255).

● **Haringey: "Trotsky Revisited".** On the 50th anniversary of the horrific murder of Trostsky by Stalin's agents, a reassessment of the work of Trotsky and an analysis of the sectarian fundamentalism his followers have come to represent. This anniversary meeting will be opened by John Callaghan, author of "British Trotskyism: Theory and Practice". Tuesday August 21st, 7.45pm, Hornsey Library, Haringey Park, Crouch End, London N8. Details: 081-348 8915. Organised by Haringey MT Group.

● **Muswell Hill: Marxism Today Summer Garden Party and Barbecue.** On Sunday August 12th, 7pm at 20a Queens Avenue, Muswell Hill, London N10. Organised by Muswell Hill CP and Haringey MT Group, details, 081- 348 8915.

● **National:** A Friday Evening Marxism Today Debate on 'Europe after the Berlin Wall' with Jan Urban of Civic Forum and others will open the 'Futures' event, in London, October 26/27. If you would like to be involved contact Geoff Andrews on 071-251 4406/0865-722512.

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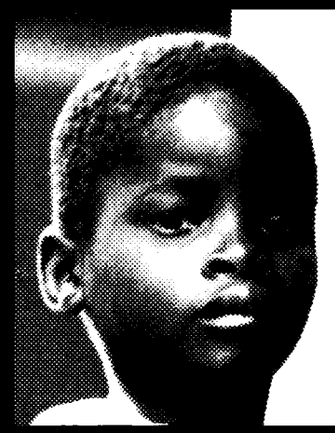

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